

***The Story Series***  
***Week 12: David***  
***The Trials Of A King***  
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For the last 11 weeks we have been making our way through the Old Testament, revisiting the life stories of people like Noah, Abraham, and Moses. We're currently in the book of 2 Samuel, the period where a king by the name of David is ruling God's people in the city of Jerusalem. These are the best of times for the nation of Israel.

Unlike in the previous king, King Saul, the glory of God is fully alive in the person of David. He is a man after God's own heart, the Bible says. People get a feel for the glory and graciousness of God by watching King David in action. God's hand of blessing is upon the nation of Israel because of King David's faithful leadership. The nation is prospering; the army is winning their battles against the enemy. The grass is mowed; the bills are paid. These are "Glory Days" for the nation of Israel.

But then, as we learn today in *The Story*, King David has a weak moment. In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2 Samuel, the Bible says that David sends his whole army off to war but David remains back in Jerusalem. One afternoon David decides to go up to the roof of his palace and to take in the glory of his kingdom. From his roof, David sees a woman bathing. The woman is very beautiful. So David sends someone to find out about her. He is informed her name is Bathsheba, and that she is *married* to one of the men in David's army. Still, David sends for her to come to his palace. During her visit, David sleeps with her and then she returns home. Soon, Bathsheba realizes that she is pregnant and she sends word to King David: "I'm pregnant."

Where do we begin?!?! What was David thinking? In this one moment of weakness, everything begins to change. Where once David was a man after God's own heart, now David desires only to satisfy his own wants and desires. It is a pivotal moment in the life of King David – actually for the whole nation of Israel. Things were going so well, and then this. David would spend the rest of his life trying to live down one night of living it up.

Having sex with a married woman was David's first mistake. He *could* have handled it like a man and confessed his sin and taken responsibility for his actions, but instead he tries to cover it up. He sends for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband – a very faithful warrior in David's army. David encourages Uriah to go home and get some rest, hoping that he and his wife Bathsheba would sleep together and Uriah would think the child is his.

But Uriah refuses to go home. The nation is at war. All of the other men are putting their lives on the line. Uriah is not about to go home. Uriah does the noble and right thing. We see the honor and integrity of this man Uriah as opposed to the scheming and lying of King David.

Since Uriah refused to go home, David goes to Plan B. He sends Uriah back to war with a note that he gives to his commanding officer. And the note says this: "Put Uriah up front, where he will be very vulnerable, and then withdraw the other men so that Uriah might be killed." And that's exactly what happens.

It's a tragic, twisted soap-opera-like story. The list of David's sins just goes on and on: adultery, deception, murder, pride. David messed up royally (no pun intended). David stoops so very low so that he wouldn't have to deal with the sin in his life.

It's easy to go off on King David for his evil schemes, but then we are reminded of the words of Jesus in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew's gospel. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman or man with lust has already committed adultery with that person in his or her heart."

Jesus says, "You have heard the commandment, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say," Jesus says, "if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment." Whenever I read this passage, I always think, "Don't we get to vote on this?" And Jesus says, "No, you don't. Thus says the Lord. This is how it will be among my people."

So all of a sudden we all find ourselves being pulled into the story of David. David's story becomes our own personal story. Using Jesus' definitions, each and every one of us has committed murder and adultery. We're no better than David. The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The very same thing that happened to David happened to Eve way back in the Garden of Eden. It happens to all of us. David SAW something (Bathsheba); Eve SAW something (the fruit). It looked good and they wanted it. In Matthew 6:22, Jesus says, "The eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness."

What we look at influences our thoughts, our behavior, our very character. We have to be mindful what we are taking in. We deceive ourselves if we think that our kids can play video games filled with violence and bloodshed and then we not become a more violent nation. We desire to grow stronger and bolder in our faith but our eyes seldom find themselves focusing upon God's Word. We must watch what we watch because it shapes our very character and behavior.

So David and Eve SAW something and then they DESIRED it. Desire is like a fire. When fire is contained and managed, it can be a beautiful, powerful thing. But an unmanaged fire (or desire – sometimes called "passion") can bring about destruction. It can burn a whole house down. We see this happening in *The Story* today.

DESIRE often leads to ACTION/BEHAVIOR. David SAW Bathsheba, he DESIRED to sleep with her, and the next thing you know he is summoning Bathsheba to his palace. Do you see how this sin cycle plays itself out in our daily lives? It seems so innocent at times. I walk into our kitchen and Kerri is pulling out of the oven some freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Moments before, I had no desire whatsoever for a chocolate chip cookie. But now that I SEE and SMELL those cookies, all of a sudden I have this great DESIRE to eat one. And so what do I do? I almost instinctively reach over and grab a yummy chocolate chip cookie. As comical and everyday as that scenario is, it shows how our sin nature plays itself out in our daily lives. We SEE, we DESIRE, we ACT – often times without a second thought about the consequences.

And there's the rub. CONSEQUENCES. Yes, God is willing to forgive us when we mess up. I'm eager to get to that part of my message. But let's be clear: God's forgiveness does not cancel out the consequences of sin. When David slept with Bathsheba, yes the Lord forgave him. But that forgiveness didn't erase the consequences brought on by David's sin. Her husband, Uriah, ends up being killed. The baby born to Bathsheba dies.

Once we bring brokenness and disobedience into a relationship, often times there are consequences set in motion that cannot be stopped.

So we need to be mindful of how the sin cycle plays itself out in our daily lives. We see; we desire; we act. Being mindful of this cycle helps us to nip it in the bud well before our sinful nature gets the best of us. To keep us from inviting brokenness into our lives, we always need to be mindful of what we are looking at and focusing upon. The New Testament book of Philippians says, "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure... and the God of peace will be with you."

One would think that after King David pulls such an evil stunt that God would take back what he once said about David, that he is "a man after my own heart." But shockingly, God doesn't. In fact, even into the New Testament David is referred to as "a man after God's own heart." So how is that possible after what David did? It's because of two words, which both start with the letter R: Repentance and Reconciliation.

At this point in *The Story*, Israel has had two kings: Saul and David. And if you compare their shortcomings, what you find is that King Saul's shortcomings have to do with him being arrogant and full of pride; he wrestled with anger issues and was compulsive. All of those things, of course, were displeasing to God. But when you compare those shortcomings to David's adultery and murder, it seems like an easy choice. God's surely would choose Saul over David.

But God does not pick Saul. God picks David. How are we to make sense of that? The difference is in their response to God. When Saul was confronted with his disobedience, he took the offensive and blamed other people and continued to live in his sinful ways. David, on the other hand, when the prophet Nathan came and confronted David with his adultery, the first words out of his mouth were, "I have sinned against the Lord." They were sincere

words of repentance. David had this deep desire to confess his sinful ways so that his relationship with God could be reconciled, so that it could be healed. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation,” David pleads with God, “and grant me a willing spirit to walk in your ways.”

David’s response of repentance led to the reconciliation between him and God. As David confesses his sin and asks God for forgiveness, David speaks of this great weight being lifted off his shoulders. He is given a new start, a second chance. David is so taken by God’s forgiveness that he writes about it. We just read together his words in Psalm 32: “Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! I confessed all my sins to you... and you forgave me! All my guilt is gone!”

The familiar words of 1 John speak this same truth: “If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confessing our sins and receiving God’s forgiveness is God’s truth for us; it is the manner in which God calls us to live our lives. The farther that we stray away from this plan of God, the more we distance ourselves from God himself, who is the source of all goodness and blessing.

David was indeed a man after God’s own heart, a man who messed up – yes – but who came before God and confessed his sin, and God restored him. David was a man who believed that his relationship with God was the most important thing in his life and so he was willing to do whatever was necessary to keep in good standing with God. David didn’t allow his pride to get in the way. David chose repentance over pride; he accepted responsibility for his actions rather than blaming everyone else.

So the question becomes, “How will we handle the mistakes we make in life?” Will we handle it like Saul and pridefully blame it on everyone else? Or, like David, will we accept responsibility and humbly go to the Lord and ask God to forgive us and strive not to make the same mistake again? Confession is never easy; it puts us in a vulnerable position. But it is necessary for us if we desire to be people after God’s own heart.

The more we build our lives on God’s plan of confession and forgiveness, the more we will experience the healing and hope that God desires to offer us, which will literally transform our lives.

Isn’t that what each of us seeks? Transformed lives? Out of the brokenness and pain of our life, God desires to bring about healing and hope. God desires to offer us a better tomorrow. That’s what God wants to do with your life. Will you let him?

May we pray like David: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

Let it be so. Amen.