



The Life of **David** **The Ideal King**



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The Life of David



The Ideal King

AN OVERVIEW

David led a superlative life. He was Israel's greatest king, uniting the nation under his leadership, defeating and subduing the pagan nations in the region, and establishing Jerusalem as both the religious and political capital. David was also Israel's greatest bard, writing psalms that went to the heart of the Jewish religion and that still express the faith and longings of Jews and Christians today. Although David was nearly as great a sinner as he was a leader, he inaugurated a brief golden age in Israel that provided the pattern for messianic expectations for Christians and Jews.

UNLIKELY HERO

When David was growing up in Bethlehem, God's people were under constant threat from the Philistines, a warlike people who combined their martial inclinations with great technological prowess.

They had nearly defeated Egypt a couple of centuries before and had settled for five city-states along the Mediterranean coast, from which the Philistines could dominate the Israelites, who were ruled at that time by a series of judges.

The oppression got so bad that the Jewish people demanded that God give them a king, so they could be like other nations. Samuel, the final judge, was unhappy, but the Lord told him, *"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king"* (1 Samuel 8:7).



Samuel anoints Israel's first king, Saul.

So Samuel anointed Saul, who literally stood head and shoulders above the people (1 Samuel 9–10). For a time, Saul faithfully served the Lord and drove back the Philistines (1 Samuel 11, 14). But soon he rebelled against God's command and ultimately was rejected (1 Samuel 15). The Lord then led Samuel to anoint David to succeed him.

A more unlikely king God could not have chosen. David was the eighth son of Jesse and was a mere shepherd boy at the time. Samuel was taken aback, but God told him, *"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7).

But for a while, Saul, who grew increasingly troubled in mind and spirit, remained the king, and young David spent some time in his service as a musician. David had spent countless hours soothing his flock with his music, and his harp provided temporary relief to Saul's afflicted soul (1 Samuel 16:23). At other times, David remained home tending the sheep.

At one point, Saul's army and the Philistine forces were gathered for battle at Sokoh in Judah (1 Samuel 17). While bringing provisions to his older brothers in the Valley of Elah, David heard the taunts of Goliath, the giant Philistine from Gath, who demanded to face an Israelite warrior in single combat. The outcome would determine the outcome of the battle.

No Israelites were courageous enough to face the giant — not even Saul. David, however, trusting in God, volunteered, saying, *“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”* (1 Samuel 17:26). And unencumbered by heavy armor or a sword, David felled the blaspheming giant with one shot from his sling (v. 49).



King Saul relentlessly pursued David because of jealousy.

RISE TO THE THRONE

David's fame spread, and he attempted to serve the king faithfully. But Saul's moral cancer also spread, and Saul repeatedly attempted to murder David, whom he viewed as a usurper (1 Samuel 18–20).

So for the next several years David had to live on the run as a sort of ancient Robin Hood. He and a growing personal guard made stops in Judah and in Philistine territory, with Saul and his army hot on their heels (1 Samuel 21–26).

Despite numerous opportunities to defeat Saul, David repeatedly refused to raise his hand against *“the LORD's anointed,”* trusting in God to protect and exalt him at the proper time.

Eventually, David and his 600 men fled to Achish in Philistine territory, convincing Israel's foreign masters that he would be loyal. So they gave him the city of Ziklag with the orders to use it as a base to harass Israel. Instead, his sons were slain on Mount Gilboa, with Israel's army routed (1 Samuel 31).

David returned to Judah, where he was anointed king. However, Ish-bosheth, a surviving son of King Saul, was anointed king over northern Israel. But Ish-bosheth eventually was assassinated, and David, now thirty, was anointed king over the united kingdom of Israel (2 Samuel 5).

GAINING THE PROMISED LAND

King David quickly conquered Canaanite-controlled Jerusalem in the middle of Israel, making the City of David Israel's capital. Further, he made Jerusalem the nation's religious capital, transferring the Ark of the Covenant there from Kiriath Jearim (2 Samuel 6), and the loyalties of the north with it.

Later he would make great provisions for the building of the Temple. God, pleased with David's desire to build the Temple, promised that David would never lack a son on the throne (2 Samuel 7:8–16), although he would not be the one to build the Temple.



King David heralds the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

David decisively turned to conquering and subduing the surrounding nations and peoples. He removed the Philistines from the hill country (2 Samuel 5:17–25), defeated Moab (8:2), and put down the Syrians (8:3–8) and Edom (8:13–14). Some enemies he vanquished; from others he exacted tributes.

David, unlike other Jewish rulers before him, was an internationalist, forging alliances with kings Hiram and Tou, and marrying foreign wives for strategic reasons.

David's vision and tactics were extraordinarily successful, and, given the relative decline of the Assyrian and Egyptian empires, he was one of the most powerful rulers of the age. David expanded Israel's borders all the way to the Euphrates in the north and to Edom in the south (2 Samuel 8–9). Under David, Israel controlled nearly all of the Promised Land.

Throughout his matchless career, however, David displayed humility and unwavering trust in his Lord, writing psalms that even today speak of faith in ways that resonate in the hearts of millions of Christians and Jews.

LATER YEARS

Unfortunately, Israel's Golden Age was short-lived. David, though he was a “*man after [God's] own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14), made sinful choices that ultimately undermined his 40-year rule. During a campaign against Ammon and the Arameans (2 Samuel 10:6–19), he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah the Hittite to cover up his sin (2 Samuel 11). God nonetheless was gracious with David, calling him to repentance through Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12).



King David confesses his sin with Bathsheba before Nathan the prophet

It is from this sordid episode that this superlative king and follower of God confesses:

“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” (Psalm 51:10–12).

Although David's repented sin was forgiven, he still suffered the consequences of his actions.

David's later years were marked by palace intrigue, sons with insufficient discipline, rebellion, and murder. David was even forced to flee from his treasonous son Absalom, who eventually was defeated (2 Samuel 15–19).

In the north, a Benjamite named Sheba unsuccessfully attempted to claim the kingship (2 Samuel 20). David also sinned by taking a census (2 Samuel 24), and his sons Adonijah and Solomon fought to succeed his throne (1 Kings 1:5–53).

Sadly, the seemingly ideal king was shown to have feet of clay, though his trust in the Lord never wavered. As he said just before he died:

*"The God of Israel spoke,
the Rock of Israel said to me:
'When one rules over people in righteousness,
when he rules in the fear of God,
he is like the light of morning at sunrise
on a cloudless morning,
like the brightness after rain
that brings grass from the earth.'*



David's unflinching faith in God stands as a lasting testimony to Christians and Jews.

*"If my house were not right with God,
surely he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant,
arranged and secured in every part;
surely he would not bring to fruition my salvation
and grant me my every desire" (2 Samuel 23:3–5)*

David's faith stands as a lasting testimony for Jews and Christians today.

THE MESSIANIC MODEL

Christians and Jews alike see David as the archetype of Israel's kings. Yet, he is more than a reminder of past glories. In a sense, David, like the mythical King Arthur, is Israel's "once and future king." Jews and Christians, in fact, see the Messiah as the "Son of David." As Isaiah prophesies:

*"They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*



King David remains the model for the Messiah.

"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious" (Isaiah 11:9–10).

The Life of David



Lesson One: Overcoming Giants

Lesson Objectives

In studying David's victory over Goliath, we will learn important lessons about trusting God, what is important to God, and overcoming challenges for God. We will also observe that:

- Challenges only appear impossible if God is left out of the equation.
- We cannot discern God's will by following the crowd.
- We can expect that other people will misunderstand our desire to serve the Lord.
- God often works through us in ways consonant with our background and gifts.
- God will defend His own glory.
- Victory belongs to the Lord.

Key Bible Verse

"All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." 1 Samuel 17:47

Before You Begin

The story of David and Goliath has captured the imagination of God's people (and much of the world) for the last 3,000 years — and with good reason. The unforgettable account of a mere shepherd boy felling a giant awakens hope in us as we face our own giants. "If David could defeat Goliath," we may reason, "then perhaps I can handle my own giants in life."



David defeats the mighty Philistine, Goliath.

While there is an element of truth in this kind of thinking, it fundamentally misses what actually happened in the Valley of Elah three millennia ago. We need to learn the lesson 1 Samuel 17 teaches if we are to successfully apply it in our own 21st century lives.

The Philistines were the neighbourhood bullies. They were an aggressive people who cared nothing for the Israelites or for the one true God. Like other followers of counterfeit gods, they

believed the ultimate test of religious belief was whether it brought “results” in “the real world.” They were not focused on “pie in the sky when you die,” but in taking other people’s pie right now — and they expected their gods to help them do this.

Among the gods the Philistines worshiped were Dagon, a grain deity, the fertility goddess Ashtoreth, and Baal-zebub, a name later attributed to Satan (Matthew 12:24–29).



The unlikely hero, David, raises Goliath's head in triumph.

The Philistines were dominating the Israelites to such an extent that they cried out for a king to protect them (1 Samuel 8), and the Lord gave them Saul. Yet this did not solve the problem.

One day, while Saul’s army and the Philistine forces were gathered for battle at Sokoh in Judah (1 Samuel 17), a Philistine champion named Goliath stepped forward to taunt the Israelites.

Goliath stood over nine feet tall and wore armor weighing 125 pounds. His spear “*was like a weaver’s rod*” (1 Samuel 17:7), and its iron point alone weighed 15 pounds (v. 7). The total effect was terrifying, and the army of God simply turned and ran (v. 24).

The stage was set for God to work through His unlikely servant, David. As we all know, God did — for His glory, David's renown, and the people's good. God also worked so that His followers today can experience the same kind of confidence as we face our own giants for Him.

A Giant Obstacle

Read 1 Samuel 17:1–11

1. In verses 1–7, the Philistines and Israelites face off for battle. Which side appeared to have the advantage? Why? How would you have reacted to the appearance of Goliath?

2. Goliath taunts the Israelites (and, by implication, their God) in verses 8–10, and they respond with fear. On what level is this fear a perfectly rational response? On what level isn't it?

3. Other people in the Bible faced fearful challenges. Look up the following Scriptures and record how the person involved handled the challenge:

Scripture	Person	Challenge Faced	How He Reacted	How God Helped
Gen. 6:12–22				
Gen. 14:13–16				
Exodus 4:1–17				
Judges 6:14–40				

4. Based on what you just read, what can you learn about God when it comes to facing your own fears?

Belittled by Others

Read 1 Samuel 17:12–37a



1. In verses 12–19, we learn that Jesse’s three oldest sons are on the battlefield, and that David remained behind in Bethlehem to tend the sheep. What does this say about how people probably viewed David’s military prowess? How do Jesse’s instructions to David confirm this suspicion?

2. In verses 20–24, David arrives and sees the scope of the problem. Why do you think he didn’t just drop off his provisions and run away with the rest?

Describe a time when you have been drawn into a bigger task than the one you were assigned. What did you do? Why did you choose to get involved?

- 3.** In verses 25–27, David considers the motives for the task and the rewards for completing it. How does David’s perspective differ from that of the men? Why does David choose to get involved?

How is God’s glory a motivation in your life? What would you say are the powerful motivators for you?

- 4.** David’s brothers belittle his abilities and his motives (vv. 28–29). Do you think they were accurate in their assessment? Why or why not?

How does family conflict shape us, for good or ill? How do you respond to unfair criticism?

- 5.** News of David’s willingness to face the giant finally reaches King Saul (vv. 30–33). How is Saul’s sizing up of David similar to that of the boy’s family?

- 6.** How does David answer Saul (vv. 34–37a)? How does David view his personal history?

In what ways has God prepared you for the challenges you face right now?

Fitted for Battle

Read 1 Samuel 17:37b–40

1. Saul allows David to confront Goliath, giving the boy his own armor and sword (vv. 37b–38). Why did he do this? What was he overlooking (v. 39)?

Like Saul, how much do you rely on solving a problem by looking to your own understanding and experience? Do you expect others to do things your way, or are you open to new ideas and solutions?

2. What is David's response (v. 40)? How is it like Saul's? How is it different?

What kind of faith did it take for David to put down the armor and sword and pick up his stones and sling?

3. How does God's past working in your life encourage you to trust Him now?

The Lord's Battle

Read 1 Samuel 17:41–51

1. In response to the giant's blasphemous boasting, David boasts in his Lord: *"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'"* (v. 45). How does knowing we are doing God's work change our perspective about the challenges of life?

2. How does David act on his faith, and how does the Lord back up His servant's confidence (vv. 48–51)?

How is this combination a good model for us today?

What This Means Today

Read 1 Samuel 17:12–15; 20–22, 26 and 28

1. Describe David's home life. How was it a promising preparation for the throne?

2. David, under God's guidance, used his conquest over Goliath as a springboard to the kingship. He became Israel's greatest king and psalmist, and the focus of the nation's messianic hopes. How might Israel's history have been different if David had not been open to God's leading against Goliath?

3. What qualities of being a great king do we see David exhibiting in this story? Which of these qualities do you admire the most?

4. In what ways do we see the desire to defend God's glory affecting world events today? What about in your own life and circumstances?

Extra Credit — Christian Reflection

Despite what his oldest brother, Eliab, had said (1 Samuel 17:28), David only showed up at the battlefield because his father had sent him on an errand. He was not looking to fight a giant, smooth his path to the throne, or defend God's glory. But when the occasion presented itself, David had only one choice to make. Like him, other followers of the Lord sometimes face unplanned, sudden decisions, and how they choose reveals what is in their hearts.

Look up the following Scriptures about people who changed their plans in response to divine leading. Then fill out the table below.

Scripture	Who	What he planned to do	What the Lord led him to do	Result
Luke 4:1–11				
Luke 19:1–10				
Acts 8:5–8, 26–40				
Acts 9:1–19				
Acts 16:11–15				

- As you look ahead to this day, this week, this month, or this year, how open are you to changing your plans to obey God's call on your life?

Ask God to soften your heart and to give you a willingness to do His will, rather than your own.

2. Read Hebrews 11. Fill in the specifics of someone mentioned in that chapter in the chart below. What characteristics do they share with David and his victory over Goliath? In what ways are they different?

Verse	Name	Shared Characteristic	Difference
v. 4			
v. 7			
vv. 8–10			
vv. 11–12			
vv. 17–19			
v. 22			
vv. 23–28			

3. Why do you think that sometimes God delivers His faithful servants in this world, as He did with David, while others He allows to suffer or die for their beliefs? (Hint: See Psalm 116:15.)

4. Read Luke 22:39–44. What giant did Jesus face in his own life? What was Jesus willing to do, yet did not want to face?

5. What giants might the Lord be calling you to slay for Him? What areas of your life might you be reluctant to yield to Him?

SOURCE Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, *How Firm A Foundation*, (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 1997).

The Life of David



Lesson Two:

The Everlasting Covenant

Lesson Objectives

In studying God's covenant with David, we will learn important lessons about God's character and His care for David and for the people of God. We will also observe that:

- God often used covenants in His dealings with His people.
- There are at least four such covenants in the Hebrew Scriptures and one in the Christian Scriptures.
- The Davidic Covenant assured God's people of His protection, their prosperity, and His presence.
- The Davidic Covenant is everlasting and has never been abrogated, so it remains in force.
- Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the Davidic Covenant.



David was anointed as king of all Israel.

Key Bible Verse

"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." 2 Samuel 7:16

Before You Begin

In ancient times, people employed an agreement called a *covenant*. This document bound the parties to actions that would benefit both. In the Bible, covenants were entered into for mutual protection against an enemy or to secure financial or material blessing. The word for covenant, *berith*, appears hundreds of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. People of this time understood well the concept of covenant.

To communicate His truth, God uses the covenant concept in His dealings with humanity. Theologically, a covenant is a gracious action by God to bless people, specifically, those who are related to Him. A covenant binds the Lord and His people to certain obligations, is unalterable, and is permanent.

Both sides agree that they face divine punishment if they fail to live up to the covenant's terms. Because God is immeasurably superior to those with whom He enters into covenant, the compact constitutes a unilateral and gracious announcement of divine will to bless His faithful followers.

Theologians have identified at least four — and possible five — examples of divine covenants in the Hebrew Scriptures: the Noahic Covenant; the Abrahamic Covenant; the Mosaic Covenant; the Davidic Covenant; and, possibly, the Adamic Covenant.

The covenants do not represent new and unique ways of God’s dealings with mankind. Each, rather, presupposes any earlier covenants and lays a foundation for later ones. Thus, according to authors Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, “Because God was faithful to his covenant with Noah, sinners continued to live and increase on the earth. Because God was faithful to his covenant with Abraham, his descendants became a nation. And because God was faithful to his covenant with Moses, the nation settled in their Promised Land, which set the stage of history for the establishing of a kingship to rule over the kingdom of Israel.”

In the roughly two centuries of its existence, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had nineteen kings, spread over nine family dynasties. The first dynasty of Jeroboam lasted twenty-two years and ended by assassination. The next dynasty, of Baasha, lasted twenty-four years, also ending by assassination. Then followed dynasties that lasted seven days, forty-four years, eighty-nine years, one month, twelve years, twenty years, and ten years, respectively. All ended via assassination or military defeat.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, had twenty monarchs of its own, but only *one* dynasty—that of David, the shepherd boy who slew a giant and established the standard for all Jewish kings. The dynasty endured after the dissolution of the united monarchy because of the Davidic Covenant.

An Enduring Royal Line

Read 2 Samuel 7:1–19

1. In verses 1–2, King David is at rest in his palace, having subdued Israel’s enemies. His first thought while at ease is not for himself, but for his God. When you feel secure and content, are you drawn closer to God, or farther away? Why?

2. To Nathan, David notes that he lives in better accommodations than the Ark of the Covenant, where God’s presence dwells in a special way with His people. Why do you think this comparison presented itself in David’s mind?

3. How does Nathan reply (v. 3), and how does the Lord direct Nathan (vv. 4–13)? How is the Lord’s message different from what Nathan expected?

4. In verses 5–7, God says that He doesn’t need a house to live in. Isaiah 66:1–2 explains why. Compare and contrast 2 Samuel 7:5–7 with Isaiah 66:1–2. What do these passages say about God’s character and power? How do these attributes reveal God’s attitude about a temple?

Passage	God’s Character and Power	God’s Attitude
2 Samuel 7:5–7		
Isaiah 66:1–2		

5. In 2 Samuel 7:8–9a, the Lord recites what He has done for David. List those things below:

What has God done for you in the history of your life? List those things here:

6. Verses 9b–11a list God’s promises to David and to the people. List these:

7. In verses 11b–16, God makes specific promises to David. List those promises below:

What is the key difference in how God promised to regard David and his family as opposed to Saul?

In what ways were God’s promises to David a fulfillment of His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3?

8. How does David respond to this gracious announcement (vv. 18–19)?

9. Read David's prayer of thanks aloud. In what ways has God blessed you and your family? Write a short prayer of thanks to God for His blessings.

Covenant Promises

Read Psalm 132

1. Psalm 132 is a psalm of ascents. God's people sang psalms of ascent together as they traveled up to Jerusalem for their national holy days and festivals. In verses 1–5, what does David want God to remember? (See also 2 Samuel 7:1–2.)



David regularly thanked God for His blessings in song and prayer.

2. In verses 6–9, the people break forth into prayerful worship, thankful for His presence. In what ways do you experience God's presence in corporate worship? In your quiet times with Him?

3. In verses 10–12, the psalm writer "reminds" God of His promise to always keep one of the king's sons on the throne. How has this covenant been fulfilled in Israel's history?

4. In verses 13–18, find examples of the Lord’s promises to His people of *presence*, *protection*, and *prosperity*. Note them by verse.

Passage	Verse(s)	Promise
Presence		
Protection		
Prosperity		

5. How do these promises to God’s people apply to your own life today?

Presence	
Protection	
Prosperity	

A Trustworthy Lord

Read Psalm 89

1. Using the beautiful parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the psalmist declares the loving faithfulness of the Lord: *“I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself”* (vv. 1–2).

Read the following verses, and write down how God’s faithfulness is expressed:

Verses	Faithfulness Expressed
vv. 3–4	
vv. 5–6	
vv. 9–10	
vv. 11–12	
vv. 14–15	
vv. 17–18	

How does knowing about God's faithfulness encourage you today?

2. Read verses 19–37. Make a list of all the promises that God gave to His people through His servant David.

Verses	Promise
v. 21	
vv. 22–23	
v. 24	
v. 25	
vv. 27–28	
v. 29	
vv. 33–34	
vv. 36–37	

3. In light of God's loving faithfulness and His promises, the psalmist in verses 38–51 pours out his complaint because external reality does not seem to match the promises of the Davidic Covenant. What are the psalmist's complaints?

How do you respond when God doesn't seem to keep His word?

4. How does the psalmist conclude his time of doubt (v. 52)?

5. Read Job 1:13–22. How is Job's response to suffering similar to the psalmist's? How is it different?

The Covenant Reaffirmed

Read Jeremiah 33:14–26

1. Jeremiah is eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem — and, seemingly, of the Davidic Covenant itself. Humanly speaking, it is all over. What is God’s answer to those who are despairing?

verses 14–15 _____

verses 25–26 _____

2. When was the last time you applied God’s dependability in the physical world to the spiritual world?

3. Read the following passages and write down how God reaffirms His promises to His people.

Isaiah 11:1 _____

Jeremiah 23:5-6 _____

Hosea 2:23 _____

What This Means Today

Reread 2 Samuel 7:1–19

1. Describe the relationship between David’s desire to honour God, with God’s determination to honour David and to make him “*a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth*” (v. 9). How has this worked out in history, among both people and nations?

2. How is this covenant still active today, and how is it not?

Extra Credit—A Christian Reflection

Look up the following divine covenants: the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 6:18; 9:8–17); the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3; 15:18; 17:1–14; 22:16–18); the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 3:4–10; 6:7; 19:5–6; 24:8); the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8–19; Psalms 89; 132). Then fill out the table below, listing the people's responsibilities and God's promise.

Covenant Recipient	Responsibilities	Promised Blessings
Noah		
Abraham		
Moses		
David		

1. Which covenant speaks most clearly to your heart? Which responsibilities do you believe apply to today?

2. Read Matthew 1:1–17. This gospel writer firmly roots Jesus of Nazareth in the royal line of David (vv. 16 and 17) and goes further, calling him the Messiah (v. 16). How does this correspond to the fact that the earthly institution of Israel's kingship is over?

3. Read John 18:28–38. On the way to the cross, Jesus stands before Pilate and says he is a king whose "*kingdom is not of this world*" (v. 36). What implications do you see for the kingship of David if this is true? For the world?

4. Read Acts 1:4–11. Jesus acknowledges that the Father will one day restore the kingdom to Israel, but the date is unknown (v. 7). What does this tell you about God's promises? How do you see them being fulfilled today?

SOURCES

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The Life of David



Lesson Three:

David and Bathsheba

Lesson Objectives

In studying David's adultery with Bathsheba and what happened afterwards, we will learn important lessons about the awfulness of sin and the grace of God. We will also observe that:

- Idleness is often a gateway to disobeying God's commandments.
- Sin involves deception, both of self and of others.
- Sin must be exposed to be forgiven.
- Even forgiven, sin produces consequences in our lives and in the lives of others.
- Sin must be confessed for our relationship with God to be restored.



David engaged in a sinful relationship with Bathsheba.

Key Bible Verse

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." 2 Samuel 12:13

Before You Begin

The annals of ancient civilizations are filled with generous praise of their leaders. Accounts of awesome construction projects, crushing military victories, and of godlike wisdom are inscribed in stone monuments and in museums across the globe. The Bible also reports that the kings of God's people did awesome deeds. Second Samuel 8:14 reports, "*And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went*" (ESV).

Yet the Hebrew Scriptures also provide a realistic picture of its heroes. We learn not only about their triumphs, but also their tragedies. We learn that the Bible's heroes are sinners, just as we are. Consider the following flawed people of God.

- Noah trusted and obeyed God and built the ark — but he also fell into a drunken stupor. (See Genesis 9:20–25.)

- Abraham believed God and was accounted righteous — but twice in fear he attempted to pass off his wife, Sarah, as his sister. (See Genesis 12:10–20; 20:1–14.)
- Jacob developed a death grip of faith in the Lord — but only after a lifetime of deception. (See Genesis 27:1–40; 31:1–20.)

In these honest portrayals of the people of the Bible, we learn that God uses flawed, sinful people — including us — to accomplish His purposes so that *He* receives the glory.

In the famous story of David and Bathsheba, we see a great man of God fall about as far as humanly possible. The Ten Commandments present a succinct summary of the moral code of the Bible. David's failure with Bathsheba represents the breaking of at least four of these commandments: the prohibitions against adultery; murder; coveting; and bearing false witness (see Exodus 20). According to the Mosaic Law, David's high-handed crimes were worthy of death.

Yet we see more at work in this sordid episode than the cycle of crime and punishment. For although there are real and lasting consequences for David, and for those around him, we fellow sinners see something else at work: God's grace.

Sin Committed: David and Bathsheba

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–27

1. In verse 1, David is at his palace while the army is fighting against the Ammonites. (To learn about the war, read 2 Samuel 10.) The author says this is “*the time when kings go off to war*,” but that “*David remained in Jerusalem*.” Why might David have stayed at his palace, leaving Joab to fight this battle for him? (Read 2 Samuel 12:26–28 for Joab's reaction.)

When was the last time you left God's work to someone else? How did it turn out?

2. From his roof David spies Bathsheba bathing, sends someone to find out who she is, and learns she is the wife of one his trusted military men (vv. 2–3). The sin begins with his eyes. To find out more about what the Bible describes as the beginning of sinful behaviour, read Job 31:1–12 and fill out the following table.

Verses	Prohibited Behaviour	Consequences
vv. 1–4		
vv. 5–8		
vv. 9–12		

How do these warnings from Job apply to David? To us?

3. In verses 4–5, David commits adultery with Bathsheba. What is the immediate consequence?

4. Verses 6–13 recount David’s attempt to cover up his sin by having Uriah sleep with the pregnant Bathsheba (Uriah’s lawful wife), but Uriah has more moral fiber than the king and chooses not to do so. How would you imagine David was feeling as his cover-up attempts failed?

How is this scene an account of how far David had fallen?

Read the Scriptures below and record the results of ignoring sin.

Scripture	Result
Psalms 36:1–2	
Psalms 66:182	
Isaiah 59:2	
Romans 1:21–24	
Ephesians 4:17–19	

5. David plots the death of his loyal soldier Uriah in verses 14–26. What does this narrative say to us about the utter selfishness and progression of sin?

6. In verse 27, David apparently gets away with it, except for the words, “*But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*” What does this signify to you? How should that knowledge impact our lives?

Sin Exposed: Nathan Rebukes David

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–14

1. In verse 1, “*The LORD sends Nathan.*” What do we know about Nathan? (See 2 Samuel 7:2; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 17:15; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 2 Chronicles 29:25.)

Why do you think God sent Nathan to David?

Do you have any trusted spiritual advisers?

2. Nathan’s parable (vv. 1–4) has a number of elements that reflect the sin with Bathsheba: the rich man (David); the poor man (Uriah); and the ewe lamb (Bathsheba). Why didn’t Nathan simply confront David with his sin?

3. David’s response to the sin in the parable is immediate and decisive (vv. 5–6). How did seeing his sin in a new light remove David’s self-deception and prepare him for God’s grace?

4. Nathan rebukes David (vv. 7–12). What elements do you see in this rebuke?

In verse 9, he says the king has “*despise[d] the word of the LORD.*” See Numbers 15:31. How do we similarly despise God’s word when we deliberately sin?

5. Are you willing to confront a friend or loved one with their sin? Why or why not?

6. David responds with a simple confession (v. 13a), bereft of excuses. What does this tell us about his understanding of what he had done?

How do you feel when people combine apologies to you with excuses? How often do you find yourself doing that?

7. Write out the three elements of Nathan's response (vv. 13b–14) to David's confession, according to the following categories:

Category	Nathan's Response
Grace	
Judgment	
Reason	

8. Why didn't the Lord simply forgive David and forget about his sin?

1. In verse 15b, David and Bathsheba's son becomes sick because "*the LORD struck the child.*" Does this consequence for David's sin seem fair to you? Why or why not?

See Joshua 7 for another account of "innocent" people being punished for the sin of their leader. What do these accounts tell us about the corporate nature of sin?

2. What examples of this can you find in the modern world?

3. David, verses 16–18, fasts and prays, even though Nathan has already told him the child will die (v.14). What scriptural grounds might David have had for hoping that God would change His mind? (Hint: See Genesis 18:20-33 and Jonah 3:10.) On what basis might *you* pray this way?
- _____
- _____
4. The child dies as prophesied (v. 18). What is David's response (vv. 19–23)? How is his response a model for us?
- _____
- _____

Sin Forgiven: David Restored

Read Psalm 51

1. In verses 1–2, a penitent David prays for himself. In verses 18–19, he prays for the nation. In these prayers, what are the grounds for God's mercy? Why is God's forgiveness not based upon *us* and what *we* do?
- _____
- _____
2. For verses 3–17, write down every petition, every confession, and every statement about God's character. (Not every verse will have every item.) How do these three elements work together when we are being honest about our sin?

Verse	Petition	Confession	God's Character
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

Verse	Petition	Confession	God's Character
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

3. What do you need to confess to God today?

What This Means Today

Reread 2 Samuel 11:10–12, then skim chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16

1. How was the judgment pronounced on David fulfilled in the life of Israel?

2. How are nations brought down or raised by the actions of their leaders today?

Extra Credit—A Christian Reflection

Scripture regularly warns against adultery and what happens to those involved in it. Read the following passages and record the consequences of adultery:

Scripture	Consequences
Genesis 39	
Exodus 20:14–20	
Proverbs 5:3–23	
Proverbs 7:6–27	

1. Read James 1:12–15. In verse 12, what is the reward for the person who “*remains steadfast under trial*”? How does love for God relate to obedience to God? (See John 14:15.)

2. Why, according to verse 13, is it wrong to blame God when we are tempted?

3. Read verses 14 and 15. How do you see this progression in David’s life? In your own?

4. How might you respond to a current temptation in ways that reflect your love for God?

5. Read Romans 7:7–25. In verses 7–12, God’s good law produces death in our lives because we are sinful. As verse 10 says, “*The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me*” (ESV). What does this fact say about all our efforts to live good and holy lives?

6. What solution does Paul offer to those who are enslaved to sin despite the presence of the law (vv. 24–25)? How does Jesus provide release from this cycle for the Christian?

SOURCES

Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).
Lane T. Davis, Executive Editor, *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

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