

# Don't Believe Your Own Headlines

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Samuel 11. As you're turning to 2 Samuel 11, you will discover that this is one of the most difficult and most problematic passages in all of the Bible, not because of the text or the controversy, in fact, it's a pretty well-laid out, simple story that we're about to read. Those who are so-called experts and theologians in the field will tell you there's really no debate about who's involved in what happened, there's not discrepancies, the reason that it is so difficult is because of who the story happens to take place in life. We're about to discover that David, the one who it said that 10,000 sang his praises, David who would be the king that would surpass all other kings, David the one who was a man after God's own heart, David the one who was anointed, who slew Goliath, David's about to have one of those times in his life, he's gonna take his eyes off the Lord, he's gonna allow the things of this world to creep in.

You know, many of us over time have had other people in our life that we've allowed, in some case rightly, to be put on pedestals. We admire them for their faith. We admire them for their devotion to the Lord. Sometimes they're our family members. Sometimes they're our friends or our colleagues or whatever it may be. Sometimes it's somebody who we admire for their diligence to their faith afar off. Maybe it's a preacher or a singer or somebody, a missionary that we've heard of but never personally met. And then sometimes we get that news feed or we get that phone call that chapter 11 has happened in their life. There's been one of those moments where they've strayed from the Lord. There's been one of those times where they've gone contrary to the word of God. Today we're about to read a tragic story from the life of David. It may conjure up stories of those who you've known through times past, but allow me to challenge you to make this story your story. It may not be exactly as it's written here, but we've all messed up. That's why the Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so all of us are David in some capacity here. Allow us to learn the lessons thereof.

2 Samuel 11 it says,

1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah.

But David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. 6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. 8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

For the sake of time, the rest of the story continues a downward spiral. David will try to convince Uriah to cover his indiscretion, even so much so that he will break the commandment in the book of Habakkuk that you should not get another man drunk and he does so. By the time you get to the end of this chapter, the man in the army by the name of Uriah, his dear friend, is dead and a woman is about to give birth to a child. You get to the end of the story in verse 26 and it says,

26 ... when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

You and I may not be David and may have never been, God willing, in this particular situation but how many times in life do we catch ourselves in a position where we've displeased the Lord? All of us have a propensity for chapter 11 in our life. All of us have those times in life where we find ourselves though maybe not exactly the same but much the same as David. You see, the problem with David is the same problem in our own lives. He began to read his own headlines. He began to listen to the voice in his head versus the word of the Lord.

Today as we approach chapter 11 not just as his story but also very much our story, several things that I think are necessary to understand and the first one is this: the fall. David experiences here in chapter 11 a very dramatic public fall. We see this oftentimes with those who we label as celebrities and such, but we've seen it in our own families and friends, have we not, those whose commitment level, those whose vows, those whose decisions become indiscretions in a variety of manners? What's interesting is when this happened in David's life.

Now admittedly, chapter 11 begins a downward spiral. Chapter 12 has him coming and being told of his sin and repenting and such. But chapter 10, I mean, the one right preceding this, I mean, this is an incredible chapter of Scripture where David reaches the pinnacle of his life. I mean, there was probably no other time in his life where he had more power, more prestige and more wealth than chapter 10.

Now forgive me advance for my spiritual gift of sarcasm coming out but it's about to. Something happened in chapter 10 that was revolutionary. Could you ever imagine this happening: all the countries of the Middle East ganging up together and trying to get rid of Israel? I know it's crazy but that's what happened. They all formed a coalition and they thought, "If we can just all attack him at one time, we can get rid of him." You know, they tried that a few years ago too and it didn't work real well, did it? What happened? David and his armies slew over 40,000 men, hundreds of chariots were burned. Victory took place.

You know, oftentimes in our lives, chapter 11 happens right after chapter 10. When we have one of those what we might call spiritual high moments. You know, in the next coming days, one of the great events of our church's life is gonna take place, we call it Disciple Now. It's where our student ministry gathers together in houses here on campus and they're focused on and very strategic on the praises of the Lord, the word of the Lord. It's one of those times where actually we have about 400 people involved this weekend, will gather on the things of the Lord. It's a wonderful spiritual high. You know what the problem with Disciple Now is though? Monday morning. You know, it's just that way in our life as adults, by the way. Hopefully Sunday is one of those days in your life where you get focused on the Lord, Sunday is one of those days where you let the things of this world fade away. You know what the problem is? Monday, because as soon as you're committed to the things of the Lord, as soon as you're passionate about the things of the Lord, that's when the enemy says, "It's time to strike."

That's exactly what happened. He was at the height of his game and the enemy struck. What's interesting is how he struck. You notice here in verse 1 of chapter 11 it was the time that kings go to battle, but David stayed at Jerusalem. How is it that this happened in David's life? I mean, this is the one the Lord used to write most of our Psalms. This is the one after God's own heart. And if it can happen in his life, most assuredly it can happen in ours as well.

What are some things that took place? What are kind of the hows of the fall? The first one is this: David was, shall we say, prideful and arrogant. You say, "Well, how do you know that he was arrogant?" Because David was a warrior. David was a fighter. David was one who expanded the kingdom. In verse 1 it says in the day that he was supposed to do that, he didn't. You know, I think David got caught up in something that we often do when we have those spiritual highs and we think we're so valuable to God, how dare we risk danger. You know one of the most dangerous things that you can find yourself in is in the wrong place with God.

David had all the skill sets in the world. David had all the success. In fact, if you were to write out David's resume, it would be exactly what you would want. The problem is it was supposed to be on the battlefield, not in Jerusalem. The right skill set in the wrong place and you get a mess. David was supposed to be on the battlefield, however the mess that happened in Jerusalem in his own life ended up worse than anything that ever happened in the battlefield. In other words, how dare we say, "Oh, but God, I'm so valuable to you. I cannot risk that."

I think the second thing that's critical to us is the fact it happened in the evening time. Notice in verse 2 it says when evening came. You say, "Well, why is that important to the story?" When people come to me and their lives are falling apart, and by the way, when people call me, I'm either the first one called or the last one called, I'm usually the last, there's carnage everywhere and it's, "Just help me put the pieces back together." You know, it's a rare day that somebody makes a mess of their life at 12 o'clock noon when they get out of church. Most messes in your life took place in the evening time, did they not? Remember the old phrase, "there's no good thing any Baptist girl or boy can do after 10 o'clock at night"? Some of you can testify. I mean, there's some mess that happens at night.

Let me ask you a question: go back, when are some of the poor decisions you've made in life, did you make them at 9 A.M. in the bright sunshine? No, you made them late at night. In fact, I know, I guess it's because the stage and age I'm in life that maybe it hits me a little harder. Have you noticed how many young people, and when I say young people, college students in particular, that we're hearing stories of abduction? I mean, it just seems like every day there's more stories of people being hostilely taken by those who mean them harm. What's interesting and I'm not casting stones, most of the stories take place in the middle of the night involving activities that we wouldn't necessarily call righteous. It's interesting that David allowed himself to meander in the night.

The next thing I want you to notice is he was inconsistent. You say, "What do you mean he was inconsistent?" Notice it says that he stood upon the house and he walked and he saw the woman. You know, the Bible is always very particular to tell us when something happens, you know, maybe for the umpteenth time or whatever it may be. You get the idea particularly as you read the rest of David's life story that this was not something he regularly did. You know, oftentimes when we allow our lives to be inconsistent with the Lord, we get ourselves in a mess. You know, one of the things that's been said, I didn't originate it but this morning I'll take credit for it, if you don't feel like praying, pray until you do. If you don't feel like reading your Bible, read your Bible until you feel like it. If you don't feel like going to church, go to church until you feel like it. In other words, that inconsistency in our life of the expression of our faith oftentimes puts us in a place where chapter 11 can happen in our lives.

But you know, it's the next thing that happened in David's life that I think may resonate the most with us. Sure we understand that he got a little arrogant, we understand that he shouldn't have been out at night where he was. We get that. We understand that he had gotten inconsistent. But I want you to notice what happens in verse 3, "And David sent

and enquired after the woman. And one said." Verse 4, "And David sent messengers." In other words, David fell into the trap of surrounding himself by only those who would agree with what he wanted to do. You know, one of the greatest problems in life is when we're wanting to desire to rebel against God that we seek out opinions of those who will encourage us to do so. I'm gonna challenge you: if you're seeking things contrary to the Lord, seek out those who you find mature or wise in the Lord and get their opinion and don't get upset when they disagree with you. That's why they're there.

None of these guys stood up. None of them said, "This is not a good idea." None of them said, in fact they said, "Well, this is Uriah's wife," almost as if, "Do you know understand?" But where was the intervention? Where was the person who stood up to? And I know what you're thinking, "Well, if they'd stood up to David, they'd have lost their life." You haven't read chapter 12. Nathan stood up to David, got in his face, and David spared his life. So our own fears of retribution go by the wayside. You see, David's chapter 11 happens in our lives when we allow ourselves to be in the same position that David allowed himself to be in.

Then we discover that his fall led to some fallout. There were some consequences, there was some residual, there was some carnage all around. In fact, you get to verse 5 of chapter 11 it says, "And the woman conceived and she told David, I am with child." You know, I want to talk about the "when" of the fallout. When is it that the repercussions and the consequences of our sin are made known? You know what the problem is? You're not in control of that. You know, but we try to, do we not? Do we not try to manage our sin? Do we not try to corral our sin? Do we not try to somehow cover our sin? Isn't that what David did? "If I can get Uriah here in an expeditious time, nobody will know. Or if I can kill him quick enough and get married fast enough, maybe nobody will put the pieces together."

You see, what he was trying to do was manage the fallout of his rebellion, the problem is we don't have the privilege of doing that. You know, the Bible talks a lot of time about Pharisees and I know in the church world they get a bad name, rightfully so. They typically were very religious, very wealthy, very powerful, and none of them really liked Jesus. So we've got that, but can I give you a modern-day definition of a Pharisee? A Pharisee is somebody who has enough money or connections to cover their indiscretions. Remember the woman caught in adultery? I've got a funny feeling that man was a Pharisee. He had the connections for him to be covered up but not for her.

You know, being a pastor and my wife walking alongside of me for so many years, there's something that we've learned in life, is that when you pass away, when you die, when you're in the casket at a funeral, did you know you can no longer manage your sin problem? In other words, the Bible's true in 1 Timothy 5:24-25 where it says some men's sins go before them but others are revealed by the Lord. Some men's rewards go before them and others to judgment. What that's saying is when we rebel against God, sometimes it's discovered on earth, sometimes we do such a good job of managing the fallout but the Lord is still aware. How many stories have you heard that upon somebody's death it was revealed what they were?

Now you know this can go a good way, right? You know, there are people who at their funerals we hear stories of generosity, we hear stories saying, "Nobody knew but this person paid for my college education and they didn't want anybody to know. This person helped my family out when nobody else would. This person..." I mean, there are some good stories that come out and I understand wanting to remain anonymous, I get that, but on the other hand, you see, when you're no longer able to employ individuals or finances to cover your mess, it just is a mess. You see, we can't control it. David's sin was gonna be discovered in nine months. He tried everything he could to cover it.

The next thing I want to address though is the "how." How is it that his sin, the fallout took place? I think it's interesting if you'll go to chapter 12 for just a moment. Nathan comes to the scene. He's a prophet of God. He's one who helped David in the past and he's really about to help him through a very unconventional means. The Lord sends him to speak truth in his life. He gives a story of a man with a bunch of sheep versus a man with just one. He says the man with a bunch steals from the man with little. What should happen to him? David says, "Ah, he should be eliminated." One of the most famous statements in all of the Bible, what does God say through Nathan? "Thou art the man." David realizes his indiscretion.

You get to verse 12 of chapter 12 it says,

12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

In other words, what we discover is that restoration was not available. You know, restoration whether it's a home you see on all these HGTV shows or cars that are restored, the desire is to go back as if it never received a blemish. Let me speak to our electronic/technological world out there: it's to play a video game and to push reset. You know, let's act as if this didn't happen. Let's go back in a time machine. And let's be honest, when our sin confronts us, we want to go back in time, let's just pretend it didn't happen. He didn't have the privilege. You see, the fallout sometimes does not allow restoration but it is always allowing forgiveness.

You see, the passage that goes along with this, I'm gonna give you a homework assignment. I want you at some point in the following days or even hours, go home and read Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is what David says about what he did. It's David's heart cry to the Lord. And why is it important? Because when you read Psalm 51, you never hear David say, "Bring back the child." You never hear David say, "Bring back Uriah." The consequences were what they were, restoration wasn't gonna happen, but here's what David understood in the midst of the fallout, that forgiveness and a right relationship with the Lord is of greater value than anything "being fixed" in the temporal. Psalm 51, 32

times do you know what he says? "I have sinned." You know, I gave you a list of things in David's life earlier, a bunch of yes-men and such, but you know one of the things we might want to add to that is David didn't blame anybody else for his mistake. He took all of the blame.

As we go into chapter 12, though, we begin to see kind of a turn in the story. Confronted with sin, he does confess. If you don't believe me, read Psalm 51. The pronouncement by God through Nathan is given. What I want to share with you in conclusion today, though, are two fallacies that we often glean not just from this story but from many stories in the Scripture that I want to somehow solve today.

The first fallacy that we have is don't worry about it until you're caught. Don't worry about it until you're caught. I want you to go back to chapter 11, verse 5. She conceives. She tells him, "I'm with child." What's the next thing he does? He calls somebody to get Uriah. We know the rest of the story. You say, "Well, why is that important?" I know we cannot answer this question but I'm gonna ask it anyway: what would it have looked like if David had brought Uriah in and instead of trying to get him to mask the situation, what if he had just confessed it all? What if he had confessed to Uriah his sin against Bathsheba? His sin against Uriah? His sin against God? What would have happened? I know we don't know the answer to that but can we please agree it would have gone better than it did? By the time you get to the end of the chapter, Uriah's dead, the child is dead, and if you read the rest of 2 Samuel, those in David's family who observed this whole mess began to emulate his behavior. You know, I think one of the great lies that we tell ourselves is, "If I can just hang on a little longer, it won't be that bad." It always gets worse the longer we delay.

You know, one of the great privileges that I have as a pastor is walking couples through those first days looking toward and preparing for marriage. Sometimes I do the marriage "counseling" and somebody that's a relative or a friend does the service and such, but it's always a privilege and I'm gonna give you one of my tricks and if you're one of those couples that I'm soon meeting with or going to be meeting with, I'm gonna go ahead and get the first five minutes over with right now. One of the things that I encourage them to do is within the first 12 or 18 months, go to full-blown biblically-centered marriage counseling. I mean, the honeymoon is over at that point. I mean, you just get it all out. You say, "Why would you tell them to do that the first year?" Because they're gonna go there one day, you might as well get it over with, and if you don't go there, you end up sometimes departing separate ways.

You say, "Why would you encourage that?" Well, one of the things that I've learned with couples who come into my life who have had severely damaged marriages, sometimes to the point of not being reconciled, is oftentimes when they get to that point and I ask them about the issue that is the main issue, I'll ask them this question, "When did this start?" Do you know when it started? First year. Because we're under this lie that, "Oh, they'll change." They're not gonna change. "This won't be that big a deal later." It's funny that which is not a big deal year 1 is a huge deal in year 10. And one of the things that happens in life and in marriage is we just allow things to be swept under the rug and 8

years, 18 years, 28 years later we see this big mound of mess and say, "I can't handle this." Well, you don't just look at that last item, you look at all of it that started a long time ago. Why is that so critical? Because when God reveals to us our indiscretions in life, don't wait for it to pile up. Don't think, "Well, if I just wait this out it'll get better down the road." Go ahead and quote as he said, "Nip it in the bud at the beginning." David didn't, and because he didn't, two lives were lost and a family in disarray.

The second fallacy I think that we tell ourselves is how God's gonna respond. We've already heard that restoration isn't necessarily a guarantee and I think we tell ourselves and I don't know if it's Greek mythology that we took in high school or college, but we think if we come clean, if we tell the truth, if we get it all out there, then the lightning rod out of heaven's gonna come down and explode in my life. I want you to go to chapter 12, verse 24, and I want you to notice what happens. David is confronted. He confesses. He writes Psalm 51 at some point but that's his heart's cry. He is in a right relationship with the Lord and the Bible says this in verse 24,

24 And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. 25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Let me share with you what's happening in those two verses. It's this word called "redemption." God is redeeming David. Redemption, and whether that's a financial redemption or such, it's an exchange of one thing for another. What did God do in David's life? He exchanged his confession and repentance for grace and mercy. He exchanged his willingness to admit he was the problem for the Lord's solution. You see, redemption at the end of the day should be what we truly want. And here's the great thing, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 that he who knew no sin, that's Jesus Christ, became sin for us so that we may be made in his righteousness. He exchanged his blood for our sin. He exchanged his blood for our indiscretions. He exchanged his blood for our mis and mal-judgments of life.

You see, what the world tells us and what our thoughts tell us, "Just keep managing it. Just keep going down the road. It's all gonna work out." The Lord says, "Hey, I tell you what, why don't we just take care of this and let me redeem you?" Solomon is mentioned there. It's the only time in the Bible that calls him Jedidiah, by the way. You realize what Solomon did a few years after this? He built the building for the ark of the covenant that David brought it back for. I don't know about you, but I want my children to walk closer with the Lord than I have. I want my children to experience greater things than I. And I hope that's your case in your life as well. Solomon was allowed to build that building. That took place because David came clean and said, "Alright, let's just deal with this," and God redeemed him. Redemption, we love to talk about restoration, it rarely occurs, but redemption is a beautiful picture. He exchanges our mess-ups with his grace.