

Bathsheba – Finding Faith after Failure

Leader's Guide

Ladies' Bible Study

July 14 & 15: Monday 7-8:15PM & Tuesday 10-11:15AM

Bathsheba is well known but for reasons most would not be proud. Yet, in the shadow of her very public sin, is a private story of hope and redemption. Though she stumbled in sin, she didn't stay there; and we can find the same hope and encouragement when we stumble, whether in a great or a small way.

1. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5. The normal activity for a king at this time of year was to be at war. What do we learn about David that may have made him vulnerable to temptation? He was "taking a vacation". He had been very successful to this point and both he and the country had prospered. He sent his men to war but stayed home from battle and may have had a lot of idle time. The fact that he got up from his bed "in the evening" might imply he had been taking a nap or just lounging around or was bored. He may have been resting on his laurels, having pride and confidence in himself. Have you noticed that having too much time on your hands, or too much pride in your accomplishments, can make it harder to be consistent in your walk with God? What does it say about Bathsheba that she would bathe in view of the palace? She may not have been as modest as she should have been as she certainly knew she was in view of the palace. Do you see any significance to the messenger's response to David that she was a married woman? The servant may have been warning David that this was a married woman, the wife of one of his well-known soldiers. In other words "Be careful, don't do this" But David chose to ignore the warning and sent for the woman anyway. At this point his lust was stronger than his devotion to God. What resistance do we see from Bathsheba? None. David sent messengers, not soldiers to get her. We don't see a hint of resistance on her part. She was most likely flattered by the king's attention. Read 2 Samuel 11:6-27. How did David compound his sin of adultery? David's first sin was against God by despising his commands and things went downhill from there. David tried deception - he hypocritically called Uriah home to give him a report on the war, hoping he would sleep with his wife so everyone would think the child was a legitimate result of the marriage. When this didn't work, he had Uriah killed and thus made others accomplices to his sins. David finally took Bathsheba as his wife in such a way that he looked honorable and decent. Notice how one sin leads to another and to another. None of David's actions and motives was hidden from God. At the same time, God's Word is mute on Bathsheba's reaction to all of this. One would expect we would have been told if she had fiercely resisted David's plans and advances.
2. David kept the cover-up going for some time. This great king, who was a prolific psalm-writer, didn't write any during this time. In Psalm 32:3-4 he described this period of his life in this way: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." Do these words make you think David had repented of his sin? This remorse is not repentance but rather the result of a guilty conscience. It led only to bitterness, regret, loss of peace. He was focused on his sin, not on God. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-9. Why do you think Nathan used a story to confront David? It forced David to be objective without the need for defense. In this way, David could clearly see the magnitude of the wrong and what the consequences were for such a sin. Read vs 13. What does David respond when he sees his sin and what does Nathan promise? David saw his sin for what it was. He rightly responded that his sin was as much against the Lord as it was against Bathsheba and Uriah. The mark of

a truly repentant sinner is one who openly confesses his sin and accepts responsibility for that sin. Notice that David said “I have sinned” not “We have sinned”. He took complete responsibility and did not try to share the blame with Bathsheba, even if she, too, had sinned. Nathan, knowing his repentance was genuine, announced God’s forgiveness. What relief he must have felt! What a huge blessing we have in God’s forgiveness!

3. Confession and God’s forgiveness gets us back into a right relationship with God, but it doesn’t necessary remove the consequences of the sin. Read 2 Samuel 12:10-14. What were the consequences of David and Bathsheba’s sin? Even as David had used the sword to commit his sin, so the sword would be used in judgment against his family (3 of David’s sons were violently killed, 2 Sam13:28-29, 2 Sam 18:14, 1 Kings 2:25). There would be calamity within his family (Absalom, his son, tried to take the throne away from David, 2 Sam 15:1-15.) Their hidden act of adultery would be revealed in a public and humiliating way (Absalom would take David’s wives in public view, 2 Sam 16:21-22). Finally, the child that resulted from the adultery would die (vs 15-18). The consequences were huge.
4. Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23. Notice in vs 15 that Bathsheba is called Uriah’s wife, not David’s wife. She is also referred to as Uriah’s wife in the genealogy of our Savior in Matthew 1:6. Why do you think David fasted and prayed while the child was alive but quit once the child had died? While the child was alive, David held out hope that God, in his mercy, would let the child live. Once he had died, that hope was replaced by the confidence that David would see him again in heaven – vs 23 “I will go to him.” David had no doubt that God had worked saving faith in the heart of this very young child! We haven’t been told anything about Bathsheba for a long time. What do you think her state of mind might have been during this time, especially after the death of her son? This was also her child and she was most likely distraught at his death. Since we are not told that she and Uriah had other children, this may have been her first child. Preceding the child’s death, in the last year and a half she had lost her husband Uriah, she had been taken as one of the wives of the king, she had given birth, she had lived with a man who showed every sign of anxiety and depression (Ps 32 reference above). She must also have been aware of her role in this whole affair and her sin. She had huge burdens to carry. It isn’t difficult to imagine that she and David could have spent tearful hours together seeking God and his forgiveness. Bathsheba would have been a believer and therefore would have known where to go for comfort and forgiveness. She was the daughter of Eliam, one of David’s personal guards, and granddaughter of Ahithophel, David’s counselor and one whose counsel “was like that of one who inquires of God.” (2 Sam 16:23) It appears that Uriah also had adopted the faith of the Israelites. She was a member of a believing family. We aren’t told when she repented, but the blessings God put in her life after this incident would certainly indicate that she also confessed her sin and was forgiven.
5. Read 2 Samuel 12:24-25. What in these verses helps us see that God has washed Bathsheba’s sins away and she now lives in a right relationship with her Lord? She and David were given a son, Solomon, and we are told the Lord loved that son. They named the boy Solomon, which means “peace.” God personally selected a name for the child. This name, Jedidiah, means “beloved of the Lord.” God honored Solomon by putting him in the lineage of the Savior. This son certainly was a blessing to his mother. The Book of Proverbs is filled with warnings against sins and foolishness as well as advice on raising children. Knowing these Proverbs were written by Bathsheba’s son may give us an insight into the things she taught him as a child. Look at Proverbs 31:1. Who is thought to have written Proverbs 31? This portion of Proverbs is attributed to King Lemuel. We do not know for certain who King Lemuel is; however, ancient rabbis considered this to be a pen name taken by Solomon. The

description of the ideal woman is a message directed to King Lemuel (Solomon) by his mother, Bathsheba. God used Bathsheba to give us a beautiful chapter of Scripture. No study of Bathsheba would be complete without mentioning that she also sat on the queen's throne in Israel (1 Kings 2:19).

6. Read Matthew 1:1-6. Who is the woman in vs 6? This shows the lineage of Jesus, from Abraham to David. Bathsheba, in vs 6, is one of only 5 women in this list that covers over 2000 years. (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Mary are the others.) Why might the Holy Spirit have given us these names, some guilty of grievous moral lapses? As we get to know more about these individuals, we can see that Jesus' human ancestors are among those for whom Jesus came into this world to save from their sins. Each was used by God, in the course of their daily life, to bring the Savior into this world. Certainly God will use me also, in spite of my great transgressions, to do his will in this world.
7. Not all of us have had our sins exposed to the whole world and written down for generations to read about. Nevertheless, God took those sins and used them for good. The example set by Bathsheba and her husband stands as a model for us of what to do with our own failures. It shows us that through sincere repentance and forgiveness, our tragic mistakes can be turned into something of beauty. Even so, Bathsheba would certainly suggest it is better not to sin in the first place. What advice does Paul give us to avoid sinning in Romans 13:14 and 1 Corinthians 6:18? 1 – be clothed in the Lord, have him as the center and focal point of our life. 2 – don't make it easy to sin 3 – don't just fight temptation, run away from it.
8. Psalm 51 was written by David after Nathan pointed out his sin. Over the next week take time to read and meditate upon this psalm focusing on the way David (and Bathsheba) took responsibility for their sin. They saw their sin in the same way God saw it and then they asked for help to turn away from it. David didn't ask only for forgiveness, in verse 2 he asked to be cleansed and in verse 10 he asked for a new heart. He asked to have his heart changed to what God wanted it to be. In verse 11 and 12 David asked God to be active in his life and to give him a willing spirit to follow his ways. Being assured of God's forgiveness, Bathsheba and David did not let their past sin destroy their future. Rather they used those mistakes as a guide to make their lives true lives of praise. Are there sins in your life where the Psalm 51 model can help you receive God's peace?

Closing Prayer

Next week: Elizabeth – Singing the Songs of Salvation

References:

Barber, Wayne, Eddie Rasnake, Richard Shepherd. *Life Principles from the Women of the Bible, Book 2*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002. 101-115

Brug, John F. *People's Bible Commentary – Psalms Vol 1*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989. 136-139, 209-217

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