

293.1: Cycles of Sin or Salvation (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 24, Updated)
[“Create in Me a Clean Heart”](#)

Not only is the story of David and Bathsheba one of the best known and best told stories in the Bible, it also has some of the very most powerful and important life lessons. How do we correct our mistakes? Even better, how do we prevent mistakes? How do we manage our feelings and wants? How do we recognize and correct for tendencies we may be blind to?

(Correction: Bring up taking seriously the text and acknowledging that David and Jonathan’s relationship sounds romantic) (Strongest, most touching example of an intimate friendship. You can read yourself and figure out what you think that relationship entailed. I’m grateful we have it, whether we interpret it as a dear friendship between men, something we don’t have modeled enough, or something more)

Productive Sunday School

1. Creating safe space for discussion
2. Reading review
3. Focus of lesson: What David’s story can teach us about sin and repentance
4. Steps of David’s sin
5. Cultural conditioning as original sin
6. Blind spots and making the unconscious conscious
7. The power of acceptance
8. The first step to repentance and righteousness: honesty
9. Making choices that increase our ability to be righteous
10. Conclusion: maintaining a broken heart and contrite spirit

Productive Sunday School

Create safe space for discussion: (Prepare the class for discussion beyond the “David was a good king, then made a huge mistake, and was very sorry the rest of his life. This story invites us to engage with the actual complexity around the way we all make poor decisions and are tempted to make worse decisions to avoid accountability for the poor decisions)

Reading review:

Class Member Reading: At first I wished more chapters were assigned, but upon reflection I am glad that we can focus on these incredibly powerful and significant chapters.

Quick historical note: It is important to remember that the story of David is told after the fact and

in large part exists to explain the fall of the house of David and eventual destruction of Jerusalem, so keep that in mind when we read about God's cursing etc.

[2 Samuel 11](#) Verse 1 brilliantly sets the stage. David is not where he should be. He sends others to do his work and remains at home. Evidently with too much time on his hands. It is instructive if haunting to see laid out so clearly the steps that led to David's terrible mistakes. "Wash your feet" is a euphemism. Uriah's relentless faithfulness foils (in both senses of the word) David's behavior. Not only did David's selfish and cowardly command kill Uriah, other men were killed as well. Both Uriah and Bathsheba's faithfulness contrast with David's behavior (she follows the rules of purity and mourning while David seems to be thinking only of what he wants)

[12](#) This is one of my favorite stories in all scripture. Absolutely brilliant. The prophet Nathan tells David a touching story of "someone else" so that David can feel and see the consequences of his own behavior. "You are the man" Nathan's parable wakes David up, and Nathan then speaks directly about the consequences of David's mistakes. We don't think about Solomon's older brother, but David's grief over his dying son is another touching point (for most of human history infant mortality was also higher than anything we want to imagine) Virtually all families lost young children due to sickness and other factors. Challenge the scriptures: The idea that God killed David's son for his sin or loved Solomon more seems like a human idea, not divine. Also note David's exploitation of the Ammonites.

[Psalm 51](#) "Create in me a pure heart"... I love the idea of being reborn, recreated. It is true that life is overwhelming and we are born with tendencies to be lazy and selfish, and the only way we can be redeemed is to allow awareness of our shortcomings to break our hearts and make our spirits contrite. This is the powerful key to gospel living and salvation.

Additional Reading: (The more detailed and complex telling of David's rise to kingship)

[2 Samuel 2](#) David anointed king, war between David and Saul (Ish-Bosheth means "man of shame" and certainly is not Saul's son's real name but again helps us see the perspective of the story)

[3](#) More Saul/David conflict (telling a more realistic and complex story than the simple narrative we covered before)

[4](#) Another example of David respecting even enemy royalty (showing a violent respect, not supporting murder through subterfuge, or even mercy killing. Saul and his son's death make David's orchestrating Uriah's murder that much more ironic)

[5](#) David conquering Jerusalem (which was the Jebusite stronghold); David defeats Philistines

[6](#) Bringing the ark to Jerusalem was a deeply significant even and strategic move that brought the symbol of God's presence into a centralized location which was also the place of the king's power, functioning to place religion under the authority of government

[7](#) Oracle/prophecy about David's house remaining on the throne of Jerusalem forever (this prophecy led directly to the idea of a Messiah who would restore both Jerusalem and the world)

[8](#) David's military victories (He seems to have been highly successful militarily and politically if very troubled otherwise, including with his family)

[9](#) David takes in Jonathan's son ("Mephibosheth" is another "shame" name "from the mouth of shame", a likely possibility is that Saul's children had Baal-based names and the editors replaced the names of foreign gods with "shame")

[10](#) David tried to show kindness, isn't trusted, so instead defeated more Ammonites

Focus of lesson: What David's story can teach us about sin and repentance

Steps of David's sin:

1. He wasn't where he was supposed to be
2. Walking on his roof (not a sin)
3. Seeing Bathsheba bathing (still not a sin. It is also vital to note that Bathsheba bathing on the roof is not a sin or mistake on her part! She was bathing after her menstrual cycle, which was commanded by the Jewish Law, and ancient culture was much more normalized around nudity than we can understand in our culture, which is the exception not the rule)
4. Noticing she is beautiful (still not a sin)
5. Asking about her (not a sin, but entering questionable territory)
6. Summoning her (action facilitating the sin; seems clear he had one thing in mind when he ordered her up like takeout)
7. Having sex with her (definitely a sin)
8. Trying to cover it up (more sin to avoid accountability)

Cultural conditioning as original sin

entitlement, KEY: We aren't entitled to ANYONE's attention. Those in power aren't used to accepting accountability, taking responsibility, respecting others as much as their own desires, etc.

Blind spots and making the unconscious conscious

Nathan had to wake David up to his mistakes by using a simple example that got past his defense mechanisms. "you are the man" (people and stories as mirrors. One of the best things we can do with art, and "likening the scriptures to ourselves", is we can ask ourselves, how am I doing this? How is this a problem for me?

The power of acceptance

Acceptance

The power of matter-of-factness (What you resist persists, don't give unnecessary energy)

"I'm attracted to that person. Hmm. Ok, moving on with my life."

Bathing on the roof: I wish there was more normalized nudity in American culture. Part of the problem with our sexual culture is we both avoid and obsess over sexuality (as we have discussed, it is a harmful shame that we spend all our time in the Church talking about "not sex" even though in a healthy life, sex covers ten times the time period of the "not sex" period from puberty to marriage.

The first step to repentance and righteousness: honesty, admitting we have made a mistake when that mistake is small and manageable.

Making choices that increase our ability to be righteous

Areas we have control over (vicious and virtuous cycles)

1. How we feel
2. How we decide (structuring our lives in such a way that we can be our better selves)
3. How we react

Repentance. Honesty and admitting we have a problem rather than covering it up

Life constantly invites us to true growth and seduces us into thinking we can avoid it. The tale of David is vividly illuminates this wrestle.

Conclusion:

We will always fall short, the core of the gospel and the best path to righteousness is to never forget our tendency to sin, to be selfish, to hurt others for our own benefit... or at least to not value others as much as we value ourselves... as we always remember this, as we do better every time we know better, I believe we experience redemption.

maintaining a broken heart and contrite spirit (realizing we make mistakes and have a tendency to excuse ourselves, "rational lies", and thus respecting the perspectives, feelings, needs of others as much as our own, embracing those around us as a way to see where we need to improve, maintaining proper orientation and alignment with true principles, staying humble and open and teachable. We won't stay on the straight and narrow path, but we can course correct enough every day that we move toward greater growth and righteousness.

- Being wrong
- Mistakes were made, but not by me

293.2: Cycles of Sin or Salvation (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 24, Sunday School)

"Create in Me a Clean Heart"

In intimate, tragic detail these passages present the story of David's greatest mistakes. This most fully described character provides opportunity to engage with difficult but unavoidably important topics.

This section includes:

- Careful reading of the assigned chapters
- Modesty
- Sexuality and consent
- Sexual transgression
- Repentance

Content Note: It should not surprise anyone that a story about adultery, sex without consent, and premeditated murder prompts discussion that may not be suitable for all listeners.

293.3: Cycles of Sin or Salvation (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 24, Study Notes)

"Create in Me a Clean Heart"

This section includes:

- David and Bathsheba in historical context
- A return to the topics of sexuality, consent, rape culture
- Rape of Tamar
- What we can do
- How we deal with mistakes
- How we are able to see our own weaknesses