



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 9 – Authentic Repentance

In 1976, the Teton Dam in Idaho suddenly collapsed with no warning after an enormous rainfall filled the reservoir to the brim. No one suspected erosion below the waterline. But within hours a small breach became an unstoppable break in the three hundred and five-foot-high earthen dam. Floodwater swallowed everything in its path for miles around. Lives were lost and the damage was incomprehensible.

David was fifty years old. For twenty years, he ruled with God's blessing and the people's favor. His life was overflowing. No one detected the erosion, but everyone would see the collapse.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover where David's life took a wrong turn.
- Consider why spiritual growth and discipline must never be neglected.
- Examine and repair any fault lines and erosion in our own heart.
- Pray honest prayers of repentance that leads to renewal.

Ice Breaker

If you could repeat yesterday, name one thing you would do differently.

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **2 Samuel 11:1–12:15** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Erosion Below the Waterline

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–13.

As this episode opens, Israel is engaged in a prolonged conflict with Ammon. The battle turned decisively in Israel's favor, so the Ammonites fled to wait out an uneasy winter in their capital city of Rabbah. When it was time to resume battle, David sent Joab to finish the job.

1. Staying home was a clear departure from David's usual leadership. Over the years, one thing that inspired such loyalty among his men was that he fought *with* them—he didn't just send them to do the work. We saw this same quality in David when he led the people in bringing the ark to Jerusalem. If you could sum up this quality in one word, what would it be?
 - a. In your observation, what has happened in David's thinking? How has he made himself vulnerable to temptation?
 - b. Growth and discipline isn't something we just drift into, but complacency is. What will keep us pressing forward, even during seasons of rest?

Psalm 119:10–11, 32

Jeremiah 29:11–14

Proverbs 8:34–35

2. God will never leave us to fight temptation alone, with no way out (1 Corinthians 10:13), but it's on us not to blow past the warning flags. What red flags did David ignore?

The Bible does not soften the details, nor does it embellish them. From the palace rooftop, David saw Bathsheba. In those days, houses had a type of enclosure for bathing purposes. She would have been shielded from her neighbor's view but not from the palace terrace. Some speculate she was trying to catch the king's eye (that may be). David sent for her, she came to him, he lay with her, she went home. End of story (but it wasn't).

David is clearly the one in the hot seat throughout this narrative. Four verses tell the deed and the rest of the chapter details David's schemes to cover it up. That said, David did not sin alone. Men and women may process it differently, but we all find it easy to assign blame. (After all, this is Adam and Eve's fault, right?)

But God's Word instructs us—and not just by way of a passing reminder—to *decide* to live in a way that will not cause another believer to stumble or fall (Romans 14:12–13 NLT).

Briefly share some practical ways this would apply to yourself.

3. Uriah was no stranger to David; he was one of David’s “top thirty” (2 Samuel 23:39). This was an elite force going all the way back to the years when Saul was hunting David. Uriah was loyal to King David, but his deeper allegiance was to God.
 - a. Consider how Uriah’s devotion to God was likely due, in part, to David’s godly influence over the years. What does his response to David (verse 11) indicate about Uriah’s character?
 - b. Have you ever felt pressured by someone you highly respect, to compromise your faith? Without sharing specifics, what did you learn through it?
 - c. Ask yourself: Are my friends, family, and co-workers stronger—or weaker—in Christ after spending time with me?
4. How could David fall so far, so fast? We would like to think that walking with the Lord builds up an immunity to sin. Not so. As we grow in the Lord, we can *and should* sin less—but we never outgrow the capacity for sin.

Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 12:1–2

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What unguarded thoughts or desires are littering my heart?

Day Three – Conspiracy and Murder

Read 2 Samuel 11:14–27.

David brought Uriah home from the front, confident he had a perfect scheme. Uriah would enjoy his wife and David could get on with his life. But it didn't go according to plan. Trouble never does. Sin always takes us further than we intend to go.

1. Failing to break Uriah's resolve, David orders his execution. Such a thought would never even occur to David at the beginning of this mess. What factors appear to be driving his decisions?

Is this the same man who was conscience-stricken for cutting the corner of Saul's robe? David is so preoccupied with his life that he never once looks up. No prayers. No songs. No "saying in his heart" to the Lord. Do you hear it? Only silence. By end of this chapter, he won't even notice that, "the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

2. David's story is at such a low point we hardly recognize him. But he will be back. Meantime, his backsliding heart can teach us a thing or two about sin.

It seems that we Christians make two common mistakes about sin. Both are wrong, and both leave us vulnerable prey to the "roaring lion" that Peter warns about (1 Peter 5:8–9).

- a. **We think God tolerates sin the way people do.** We think the absence of punishment means that God is just looking the other way. Not so! God warns, "You thought I was altogether like you, but I will rebuke you" (Psalm 50:21).

David was the king. He was God's man. He was powerful and successful even while committing grievous sin. Is success always synonymous with God's approval? Why or why not?

- b. **We try to hide our sin from God, thinking He will pound an angry fist on us.** But when we come to God in authentic repentance and confess our sin, He forgives! God no longer holds our sin against us. *God doesn't forgive because He wants to be lenient with us—He forgives because Jesus paid the penalty for us* (Romans 8:1, 31–34).

David confessed his sin and the Lord put away his sin. "Have mercy on me, O God, because of Your unfailing love...blot out the stain of my sins...restore to me the joy of Your salvation..." (Psalm 51).

If David, who never got to see how God worked out his salvation, could rejoice in being forgiven, how much more should we?

Memory Verse

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Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What attitude or habit am I tolerating that God wants to clear out?

Day Four – You Are the Man

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–15.

David tried to hide his sin and for almost a year, he did—at least on the outside. It was a long time to be estranged from God but David stubbornly remained silent. So God sent the prophet Nathan to get the conversation started.

1. Does this scene look familiar? A king, a prophet, and a strong rebuke from the Lord. Briefly describe what you recall about the confrontation between Samuel and Saul. (You may want to look back over Session 2, Authentic Obedience.)
2. One of David’s responsibilities as king was to hear cases and judge according to the book of the law (Deuteronomy 17:18–20). So Nathan presented David with a “case” in need of justice. What made Nathan’s approach so wise?
3. “I have sinned against the Lord.” For the first time in a long time, David is being honest with himself and before God. Authentic repentance. In that moment, he was not a king, he was not a mighty warrior, he was not a man with a reputation to protect. He was a sinner, broken and bared. Pleading for grace and forgiveness.

“Bringing whatever we are and whatever we have done to the cross is the only thing that leads to wholeness.”

Here is good news. God never leaves truly confessed sin unforgiven. The devil wants you to forget that, but you have God’s Word on it!

Gail MacDonald

Psalm 32:3–5

1 John 1:8–9

Isaiah 55:6–7

Memory Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What am I ready to relinquish and trust God to make new?

Day Five – The Lord Has Put Away Your Sin

2 Samuel 12:13

So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”

Imagine the mercy those words poured into David’s guilty heart. He saw what he had become. He was an aggressor, a murderer, an adulterer, a conspirator, a liar, a hypocrite, an angry judge. He broke faith and violated his own honor with soldiers he willfully sent to death. And he was the king, bearing a greater weight of guilt and responsibility for what he had done. Guilty as charged.

But David prayed. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). The words are poetic, but hear David’s heart. *Here I am God, smashed to pieces. I’ve racked up so much guilt it’s crushing me. All that’s left of me is this broken pile of sin and shame.*

David asked to be forgiven. He wanted a new heart, another chance. Not because he deserved it but because God was willing to take him back. He is willing!

Memory Verse

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Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Think it over . . .

List five specific reasons why you are grateful for God’s forgiveness and steadfast love.

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests
