



Bathsheba

Woman of Love, Guilt, Shame, Grief, and Forgiveness

The Story of Bathsheba

Samuel 11:1-5

The following spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to destroy the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rahhah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

Then David sent for her, and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. (She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period.) Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheba discovered she was pregnant, she sent a message to inform David.

2 Samuel 11: 6-27

So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along and how the war was progressing. Then he told Uriah, "Go on home and relax." David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace.

But Uriah wouldn't go home. He stayed that night at the palace entrance with some of the King's other servants. When David heard what Uriah had done, he summoned him and asked, "What's the matter with you? Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?"

Uriah replied, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents and Joab and his officers are camping in the open fields." "How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I will never be guilty of that." "Well, stay here tonight," David told him, "and tomorrow you may return to the army."

So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next. Then David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance. So the next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver.

The letter instructed Joab, "Station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed." So Joab assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemies strongest men were fighting. And Uriah was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers. Then Joab sent a battle report to David. He told his messenger, "Report all the news of the battle to the king. But he might get angry and ask, 'Why did the troops go so close to the city? Didn't they know they would be shooting from the walls? Wasn't Gideon's son, Abimelech, killed at Thebez by a woman who threw a millstone down on him?'"

"Then tell him, 'Uriah the Hittite was killed, too.'" So the messenger went to Jerusalem and gave a complete report to David. "The enemy came out against us," he said. "And as we chased them back to the city gates, the archers on the wall shot arrows at us." "Some of the men were killed, including Uriah the Hittite."

"Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged," David said. "The sword kills one as well as another! Fight harder next time and conquer the city!" When Bathsheba heard her husband was dead, she mourned for him. When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the Lord was very displeased with what David had done.

2 Samuel 12: 1-13A

So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. The rich man owned many sheep and cattle. The poor man owned nothing but a little lamb he had worked hard to buy. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing a lamb from his own flocks for food, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and served it to his guest." David was furious. "As surely as the Lord lives," he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you his house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah and stolen his wife. From this time on, the sword will be a constant threat to your family, but you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own. Because of what you have done, I, the Lord, will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man, and he will go to bed with them in public view. You did it secretly, but I will do this to you openly in the sight of all Israel.'" Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

2 Samuel 12: 13-23

Nathan replied, "Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin. But you have given the enemies of the Lord great opportunity to despise and blaspheme him, so your child will die." After Nathan returned to his home, the Lord made Bathsheba's baby deathly ill. King David begged God to spare the child. He went without food and lay all night on the bare ground. The leaders of the nation pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused.

Then on the seventh day, the baby died. David's advisers were afraid to tell him. "He was so broken up about the baby being sick," they said. "What will he do to himself when we tell him the child is dead?" But when David saw them whispering, he realized what had happened. "Is the baby dead?", he asked.

"Yes," they replied. Then David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. Then he went to the Tabernacle and worshiped the Lord. After that, he returned to the palace and ate. His advisers were amazed. "We don't understand you," they told him. "While the baby was still alive, you wept and refused to eat. But now that the baby is dead, you have stopped your mourning and are eating again."

David replied, "I fasted and wept while the child was alive, for I said, 'Perhaps the Lord will be gracious to me and let the child live.' But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me."

2 Samuel 12: 24-25

Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife, and slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved the child and sent word through Nathan the prophet that his name should be Jedidiah – “*beloved of the Lord*” – because the Lord loved him.

1 Chronicles 3: 4B-5

Traditionally, Bathsheba is remembered for her adulterous affair with King David and is referred to as “the wife of Uriah”. But let’s recount how God remembers her.

Then David moved the capital to Jerusalem, where he reigned another thirty-three years. The sons born to King David in Jerusalem included Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. Bathsheba, the daughter of Ammid (Eliam), was the mother of these sons.

1 Kings 1: 11-14

Then Nathan the prophet went to Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, and asked her, “Did you realize that Haggith’s son, Adonijah, has made himself king and that our Lord David doesn’t even know about it? If you want to save your own life and the life of your son, Solomon, follow my counsel. Go at once to King David and say to him, ‘My Lord, didn’t you promise me that my son Solomon would be the next king and would sit upon your throne? Then why has Adonijah become king?’ And while you are still talking to him, I will come and confirm everything you have said.”

1 Kings 1: 1: 28-31

“Call Bathsheba,” David said. So she came back in and stood before the king. And the king vowed, “As surely as the Lord lives, who has rescued me for every danger, today I decree that your son Solomon will be the next king and will sit on my throne, just as I swore to you before the Lord, the God of Israel.” Then Bathsheba bowed low before him again and exclaimed, “May my lord King David live forever!”

1 Kings 1: 47-48

All the royal officials went to King David and congratulated him, saying, “May your God make Solomon’s fame even greater than yours!” Then the king bowed his head to worship as he lay in his bed, and he spoke these words, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who today has chosen someone to sit on my throne while I am still alive to see it.”

Song of Solomon 3: 11

Young women: “Go out to look upon King Solomon, O young women of Jerusalem. See the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, the day of his gladness.”

Matthew 1: 6, 16

Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon (his mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah) ... Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

Study Guide

Read the Story of Bathsheba, and discuss the following questions. Keep in mind there is more to the story of this woman than what is presented in the few short verses.

1. **Did Bathsheba plan to seduce King David by bathing in her private courtyard?**

- She was occupied with the ritual bathing required after her menstrual cycle.
- She believed her courtyard with its light fabric canopy was private from onlookers.
- He surprised and startled her, so she was evidently not expecting him to be on the roof.

2. **When King David sent his guards to bring her to him, do you think she could refuse a command of the king?**

- In Bathsheba's time, women had very few rights to refuse any command from a man who had authority over them whether father, husband, or king. Subjects of the king, man or woman, would not refuse guards sent to summon them to the palace.
- Once there, she was taken by a king who was used to taking any woman he wanted.
- Bathsheba knew it was wrong to commit adultery, but to refuse a king's request could mean punishment or death.

3. **Bathsheba was never summoned by David after that night. When she found out she was pregnant, what did she do?**

- Since Bathsheba had just completed the purification rites following menstruation, she knew she could not have already been pregnant by her husband when David slept with her. She knew she would be judged an adulteress and would surely be killed. Fearing for her life and the life of her child, she sent her maid to deliver a note to David stating that she was pregnant.
- Bathsheba also knew that when people found out the child was David's, she would be the one who would be blamed and punished. David was a beloved king and would not have to share the blame.

4. **What was David's reaction to the news of Bathsheba's pregnancy?**

- David's first thought was how to cover up what he and Bathsheba had done by bringing Uriah home from the war so he could sleep with Bathsheba and he could pass Uriah off as the father of her child.

5. **Did David's plan succeed?**

- No, Uriah refused all of David's offers to go home and be comfortable while his men were sleeping on the battlefield.

6. **What did David do next?**

- Rather than take responsibility for his mistakes and ask God for forgiveness, he compounded the mistakes by calling for Uriah to be killed in battle.
- David allowed himself to fall deeper and deeper into sin. He then became responsible for the murder of Uriah.
- When you make mistakes, do you take responsibility, or like King David, do you try to cover them up?

7. When Bathsheba found out her husband Uriah had been killed, what was her reaction?

- When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. (*2 Samuel 11: 26*) Her mourning showed she loved him.
- She did not show relief that she would not have to reveal her adultery to him.
- Until David confessed to Nathan what he had done to Uriah, Bathsheba most likely would not have known David had him murdered.

8. David's choices brought the sword to his family and there was never harmony or peace between his wives and children. Although David's sins were forgiven by God, the consequences of them were far reaching. What can we learn from him?

- Do you often make choices you condemn others for making?
- To look past the moment and see what long-term consequences our actions will have on others.
- When we try to cover up our mistakes instead of taking responsibility for them, we are going to compound both the mistakes and the consequences.

9. When Nathan came to confront David about his sin, what did David do?

- David was truly sorry for his adultery with Bathsheba and for murdering her husband Uriah to cover up his adultery. He knew that his actions had hurt many people. But because David repented of those sins, God mercifully forgave him.

10. What do we know about forgiveness from God by God's forgiveness of David?

- No sin is too big to be forgiven if you are truly sorry! Do you carry guilt and shame in your heart and feel that you could never come close to God because you have done something terrible? God has shown he can and will forgive you of any sin.

11. David did not continue to dwell on his mistakes. He returned to God and God forgave him, opening the way to begin life anew. What does this mean for us?

- When we return to God, accept his forgiveness and change our ways, he gives us a fresh start.

12. The choices David made brought much suffering on Bathsheba. She lost her husband to murder, and perhaps, the most bitter suffering of all was losing her first born son. Solomon was the fourth son of David and Bathsheba. Therefore several years had passed between the death of their first born son and Solomon's birth. Bathsheba would most certainly have been still grieving the child's death. Since David committed the sin, why was his life not taken as was the law of the time?

- There were still parts of God's plan that David needed to fulfill. Frequently when we make mistakes, it is the innocent who end up suffering. Which is why we must remember, forgiveness does not cancel the consequences we set in motion.

13. What part did Bathsheba play in King Solomon's reign?

- She became influential in the palace alongside her son Solomon.
- Young women: "Go out to look upon King Solomon, O young women of Jerusalem. See the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, the day of his gladness." (*Song of Solomon 3: 11*)

What If...

As David looked down from the roof of the palace, he saw a beautiful woman bathing and he was filled with lust. David should have left the roof and fled the temptation. Instead, he entertained the temptation by inquiring about Bathsheba. The results were devastating.

Bathsheba's story is of a woman who suffers painful losses; first her husband, then her first born son. She is dishonored as an adulteress and taken into the palace as one of King David's many wives. Because of his love for her, Bathsheba is not accepted by the other wives who are jealous of his preference for Bathsheba. Once in the palace, Bathsheba is befriended and mentored by the prophet Nathan and has her sons educated by him in the ways of faith. She makes sure that her sons are better men than David's other sons and that they follow the laws of God.

When Solomon was born, the prophet Nathan told Bathsheba and David that the Lord loved the child and that his name should be Jedidiah – “beloved of the Lord” – because the Lord loved him. (2 Samuel 12: 25)

David promised Bathsheba that he would sit on his throne and be the next king of Israel. Sometimes providence works in mysterious ways. Had David not gone walking on the palace roof that afternoon, or if Bathsheba had not been bathing in her courtyard at that moment, would there have been a King Solomon? Remember King Solomon is an ancestor of Jesus.

The prophecies that King David would be born in Bethlehem and that Jesus the Messiah would also be born in Bethlehem are a culmination of a much bigger plan than any one person's individual story. David and Bathsheba are but one chapter, one very important chapter, in the greatest story ever told. But like every good story, every chapter leads us closer to the finale, the birth of Jesus Christ. The story of Bathsheba is a story of love, loss, and forgiveness. Caught up in circumstances beyond her control, she suffered shame, grief, and ultimately found her way as the mother of one of Israel's greatest Kings, Solomon.

Although she is regarded as an adulteress, we see in God's eyes she is an important part of his bigger plan. As wife to Israel's greatest king, David, and Queen Mother to Israel's wisest king, Solomon, Bathsheba was a pivotal character in the story of the ancestral line of Jesus.

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Smart Molecules, Stupid Molecules

What has happened to the population that they can take an over-the-counter drug (e.g. a bladder control product advertised on television) with a huge list of contraindications and side effects and willingly and freely ingest them? Where has our ability to discern, our common sense, gone that we would choose to damage ourselves in such a manner?

It seems that with the modernization of western medicine we have become numb to this type of warning and accept without question or thought that we must endure these things to achieve the desired benefits. And, if we develop side effects we can just let the doctor give us another potent drug to take the relieve the symptoms, but it may bring with it a new set of side effects and complications. All of these assault the body and cause damage and leave residue to further overload and overwhelm the body's immune system and natural body intelligence. Our body has a natural intelligence that knows how to restore our body to health and it has a problem with stupid drugs. If aromatic molecules are called “smart” molecules, then drug molecules are “stupid” molecules for sure.

~ Alexandria Brighton