

SUMMER OF SIN: LUST

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2 Samuel 11:1-15

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ³David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' ⁴So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵The

woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'

6 So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. ⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' ¹¹Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths;* and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' ¹²Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then

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draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Were you taught or exposed to this story growing up in church? What were the lessons you learned from this story? What's it like to read this story now?
3. Lust as a deadly sin is not describing the presence of sexual desire. Human bodies, pleasure, and sexual desire are not inherently bad things (they are part of the creation God calls "good" in Genesis 1). The deadly sin of lust is describing the desire and dynamics of domination, control, and exploitation. How does this show up in the story of King David and his choices against Bathsheba and Uriah?
4. There are some NRSV translation choices that soften this story and might make it seem like consensual "adultery" when it is not. David did not send messengers to "fetch" Bathsheba in verse 4, but to "take" her. That verb is the same one used in 1 Samuel 8:11-17 to describe the dangers of having a king—a powerful person who takes, and takes, and takes. The softening of this episode continues in 2 Samuel 12:1: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." The underlying Hebrew reads literally: "But what David had done was **evil** in the sight of the Lord." Note: Bathsheba is not blamed as a contributing participant—she was victimized by David's evil choices.
 - a. What are all the evils David perpetrates in this episode?
 - b. There is a long history of softening and excusing sexual violence toward women. How does that show up in the ways people misinterpret Bathsheba seducing David?
 - c. Why might people want to soften how cruel and abusive David's actions really are? Why is accountability so important?
 - d. Why do you think it is so important for stories like this to be preserved and remembered in scripture?
 - e. How might this story shape the way you think about leadership, integrity, and responsibility?
5. Bathsheba is a survivor. Later, she exerts her influence to help her son Solomon succeed David for the throne. Through Solomon, Bathsheba is included in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:6). How does the inclusion of Bathsheba's story help us understand what God is all about in Christ?