

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

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2 Samuel 11

“Avoiding Moral Failure”

Crimes and Misdemeanors is a story about Judah Rosenthal, a successful ophthalmologist, a man highly regarded in the community, as well as a respectable family man

-but Judah has a secret—he is having an affair with flight attendant Dolores Paley

-and over time, after it becomes clear to her that Judah will not end his marriage, Dolores threatens to inform his wife of their affair

-but Judah does not wish to imperil his marriage, nor his career, nor his reputation, so he hires a hit man to kill Dolores

-and in this story, Judah succeeds in covering his tracks

-more than this—after a season—Judah has worked through his guilt and is enjoying life once more

-as he has worked it out—with time—ANY CRISIS WILL PASS

-and the film ends

-but as the story in 2 Samuel 11 reveals—this is really not how life works—how things end

-in this narrative—the man's name is David—and he too is accomplished, respectable

-David is the anointed one—the warrior king

-a true success story—administering justice, showing compassion—everything God intends a king to be

-but David also has a secret—he too has met a woman he finds alluring

-and what follows is a defining moment, a watershed moment

-David's tragic decision will set the course for the rest of his life—this crisis will not pass

-there is a loss of innocence never to be retrieved—a family dysfunction that will take a long time to heal

-like Crimes and Misdemeanors, the story can be broken into two pieces—THE AFFAIR/
THE COVER UP

1. THE AFFAIR—read verses 1-5

-the phrase “at the time of the year when kings go out” is the one clue to explain what happens

-kings go out to battle when the time is most favorable for military campaigns—and David is the king

-Spring is the optimal period between winter rains and harvest—when roads are passable—and the heat is tolerable

-and there is still unfinished business—especially with the Ammonites (see map)

-BUT DAVID SENT JOAB

-maybe it was necessary for David to attend to business at home

-meeting with the city council—going over land use planning, zoning restrictions—meeting with global warming experts—who knows?

-what we do know is that David was not where he was supposed to be

-and now it is early evening, when the sun has just set—the twilight hour—the time when men are most vulnerable

-David is restless—*tired from not being tired*

-worse—he is adrift, having lost his way

-his guard is down—he has neglected core disciplines

-when we do, hordes of opportunistic sins breach the walls and get through the gates

-David has escaped the challenges that drive kings to their knees—seek for God

-and now he throws caution to the wind

-the text tells us David saw a woman “of very good appearance”—a Hebrew phrase descriptive of one with striking physical form—a woman of exceptional beauty

-and so he inquired—receiving back more information than he probably wanted

-for this was a married woman—this was a wife of one of David’s thirty men

-Bathsheba was a member of his own tribe—a granddaughter of one of his closest advisors

-and David was a married man

-everything internal and external shouted—don’t go there!!

-but it is too late for rational thought

-driven by impulse, David has become like the fool his son will write about in Proverbs 7

-who gets perilously close to something he should be running from

-like a fly buzzing a spider’s trap—an alcoholic who dallies on the premises of a liquor store

-David is reckless—loitering in the twilight—and we can almost feel the impending darkness as he sends for her

-the language is forceful

-David is the king—he will have his way—take what he wants—*even if it is not his to take*

-each verb—send, get, laid—is an abuse of power

-there is a tendency for powerful men to become full of themselves—play God

-like Nebuchadnezzar who walked his roof and considered his might—Daniel 4:29

-we would be naïve if we assumed this was something sudden—*a spiritual blow-out*

-but like any sin, sexual sins occur gradually—they are the result of long, slow leaks

-no one falls into an affair any more than one falls off the Markham Bridge—it takes effort to get there

-and now David must give his best efforts to other things

-for Bathsheba (who has purified herself—underscoring she was not pregnant) is now pregnant—and this leads to the second part of the story—

2. THE COVER UP—read verses 6-15

-David panics—he is like a car that begins to run with more speed than direction

-driven by lust and ego and power—and now by the need to avoid exposure

-David begins his cover up—for this is what we do with sin—it goes back to Adam and Eve

-David sends for Joab/sends for Uriah/sends Uriah home in hopes he will sleep with his wife

-but David's plans to manipulate—remove evidence of a one night stand—is not to be
-Bathsheba's husband—Uriah—called from duty—will not go home
-he will not sleep in his comfortable bed—and wash his feet—perhaps a euphemism for sexual intercourse
-he is a man compelled by duty—not lusts

-so David sends him back—with a death sentence—and marries a grieving widow
-and it appears that this crisis also passed
-but like us—kings are not capable of revising moral reality
-not capable of hiding from God—who sees everything
-He always has the last word—“And the thing which David did was evil in the eyes of God”—verse 27

APPLICATION—This story tells us more than we want to know about David—more than we want to know about ourselves

-for most of us are in this story—*whether in fact or imagination*
-for we are sexual beings—vulnerable to sexual temptations, to lust
-the long list of moral failures in our nation's leaders—in our friendships—in my seminary class—and maybe in our own personal lives—confirm this
-that our culture is flooded with sex—and sexual impurity is pretty normal—also tells us this

-no one is too young or gets too old to fall—too important or too spiritual
-and if we do—these become our defining moments
-for what sexual sin is to David— is what sexual sin is to us—

1. SEXUAL SIN IS DEGRADING

a) degrading of character

-like all sin—this sin diminishes and disgraces lives
-possessed by his lust, David begins a descent from a man of substance to a man hollowed out
-from a man conformed to the will of God—to a man deformed into a leering voyeur—a sexual predator—and eventually a cold blooded murderer
-more than any other sin, sexual immorality despoils and wrecks wholeness
-ask anyone addicted to pornography—possessed by desire

b) degrading of rationality

-David is no longer wise—no longer cognizant that he is accountable
-people who get involved in affairs bypass all reason
-start thinking they deserve a little pleasure—a few indulgences-start assuming they are morally autonomous
-there is a blundering to his movements
-he is trying to cover up—but his plans only involve more people
-he is actually creating more exposure—he has no sense of the consequences
-what is he thinking? He is not thinking!

-David is no longer guided by divine will—he is driven by fleshly impulse

c) degrading of sex

-a gift from God intended to be experienced at the deepest levels—emotionally, spiritually—is reduced to something merely physical

-what was designed for more than pleasure is reduced to mere pleasure—and ultimately to emptiness

-for there is no relationship here in this story—no conversation—no love

-*rather than the substance of intimacy—there is only the hollowness of indulgence*

-which seems to be David's pattern from the beginning

-he does not seem to experience intimacy with any woman

-with Michal—it seemed to be a marriage of royal convenience

-with Abigail—it was a beautiful love story that ends with the words—and David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel

-add to the list the concubines (secondary wives) of 2 Samuel 5:13—as well as Abishag, the young nurse called to play the role of wife near the end of his life

-and you see a pattern—you develop a picture

-David was—at worst—a womanizer who sacrificed intimacy for multiple relationships never sanctioned by God

-*and it diminished his life—as it does ours*

2. SEXUAL SIN IS DISORDERING

-all sin ultimately curves inward—sexual sin in particular

-“Lust is a self-gratification project”—DeYoung

-Nebuchadnezzar walked his roof considering his power—David walked his roof and considered himself

-*for men who engage in an affair with another woman first engage in an affair with themselves*

-we become infatuated with our accomplishments, our position, and our wants

-we become fascinated with how we feel—and how we feel about how we feel

-problem—the more self-absorbed we are, the less there is to find absorbing

3. SEXUAL SIN IS DESTRUCTIVE

-like a cancer that destroys—sexual sin metastasizes, branching out in devastating ways

-“*It’s a polluted river that keeps branching and branching into tributaries*”—Plantinga

-this is what sin does—what this story underscores

-lust branches out into gratification and greed, which branches into deception and lying, branches into murder, and finally branches out into the next generation

-David will eventually have a son through Bathsheba who will have the same propensity to have multiple relationships

-all of this underscores the words of Romans 6:23—the wages of sin is death

- for sexual sin—and all of the sins it hatches—rip families, churches, and communities apart
- they take away one's strength, wrecks integrity and wholeness
- all that one has worked for—the loss of self-respect—the respect of others—respect of family and friends
- they rob one of laughter—and ruin one's fellowship with God
- in a defining moment—all of this happened to David

CONCLUSION

- thankfully—the goal of Scripture is not to leave us here
- not to push us down and shame us—or resurrect guilt
- David will have another defining moment—healing is possible

-but Scripture does warn and tell us how we can avoid this

1. RUN FROM—I Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22
 - when it comes to sexual temptation—don't reason with it
 - don't court it, flirt with it—don't dabble—don't experiment—*don't linger on the roof top*
 - don't test your resolve—walk close to the edge—RUN!!
 - because if you don't—you will fall
2. RUN TO
 - Psalm 119:9—“How can a man keep his way pure? By keeping God's Word—seeking God's face”
 - merely denying ourselves, cutting off impure relationships, securing internet filters—cutting out habits that lead to sexual sin is not enough
 - we're still left with the emptiness that led to the pursuit of lust in the first place
 - we must fight the pleasures of disordered lust with the massive promise of a superior happiness
 - we're back to the Jesus creed—love the Lord with all of your heart and mind and soul—Matthew 22:37

So—read your gauges—take your spiritual temperature—examine your soul

- look for the warning lights—that might signal you are no longer in the chase, pursuing God
- no longer running hard to fulfill your call
- skipping the rigors of a holy life—adapting to the culture

LG QUESTIONS

1. What led to David's moral failure? What leads to ours?
2. Was Bathsheba culpable? Should we assume this? Does the writer suggest this?
3. What if Uriah wasn't murdered? Would it have mattered? What does this say about the way sin works?
4. Does this story remind you of a contemporary story of sexual sin? What are the similarities?
5. How can sexual sin be prevented?