



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES: Part Two

BATHSHEBA: LESSON 14

The story of Bathsheba has been extremely eye-opening. I've probably read it over 100 times, but usually with the purpose of catching a glimpse into David's soul rather than Bathsheba's. David has always been one of my favorite characters in Scripture, and although I detest his sin, I admire the honest way he took responsibility for it and truly repented. I really don't remember spending much time examining the role Bathsheba played in the whole sinful incident. I was truly shocked as I read commentary after commentary and their thoughts about Bathsheba. The traditional view seems to be that she isn't to blame for this situation, yet others hold her at least partially responsible. Hmm ... I'll be interested to hear your thoughts after we discuss it further. Scripture clearly points out David's sin, yet is silent on Bathsheba's feelings, motives, or thoughts. Reserve your opinions and pre-conceived thoughts until we read, ponder, and discuss. You are obviously entitled to your own opinions, especially since the Word is silent on most of it. But I pray that the Holy Spirit gives us all insight, wisdom, and application from the life and character of Bathsheba. Some call her the woman who was "at the wrong place at the wrong time" ...

First Day

1. Read 2 Samuel 11:1-27. Write a summary of the story by observing the text and listing the facts you find. (There are lots!)

2. Who are the main characters?

3. Do you see any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

4. Can you list the various sins David committed?

5. What do we know about Bathsheba?

6. Write your initial thoughts on the story.

This takes place in the final stages of the Israelite-Ammonite war, which provides the context of our story. The Ammonites continued to show hostility toward Israel, and in the Spring, after the latter rains were over, it was customary to resume military activity. David ordered Joab to launch an invasion of Rabbah, which was the capital of Ammon. Kings often led their armies out to battle, but this time David did not. Most believe David should have been in battle rather than remaining in Israel, however, it is true that sometimes he did stay behind in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 10:7-14), but never with these disastrous results. We don't really know if "staying behind" was an actual sin on David's part. Obviously in hindsight, going to battle almost sounds safer!

We'll end here for today, but continue to ponder the story, focusing on Bathsheba's role. I wonder what emotions she was feeling; I wonder if she knew David was watching; I wonder if she wanted to go to him or felt obligated ... I wonder. I wonder, I wonder ... 😊

Memory Verse of the Week: “The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.” Exodus 34:6-7

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Which phrase grabs your heart today?

1. Let’s begin today by quickly reviewing our story in 2 Samuel 11:1-27. Describe what David saw when he went to the window.

In Jerusalem, the homes were low with flat roofs, so it would be easy to see the roofs of nearby homes. David probably walked out onto the roof to soak in the cool evening breeze. Perhaps he couldn’t sleep. Some wonder why Bathsheba was bathing right at that moment. Did she assume the king and the rest of the neighbors were gone? Did she look around before she undressed to see if anyone was on the adjacent roofs? Did she have ulterior motives as some suggest, guilty of seduction? Was Bathsheba completely innocent and was simply just bathing?

2. Write your thoughts on the paragraph above. Does the text give us any hint of her motive?
3. When David looked over and saw her, what “should” he have done? Was he in sin when he “saw” her? What do James 1:13-15 and 1 John 2:16 say about it?
4. When David asked around to find out the woman’s identity, how does verse 3 describe her?

Bathsheba’s name meant “The Seventh Daughter” or “The Daughter of an Oath.” She was from a God-fearing family, the daughter of Eliam (“God is gracious”), the son of Ahithophel. Eliam was one of David’s officers. She was married to Uriah, who happened to be one of David’s

top 30 warriors, called “The 30.” (2 Samuel 23:39) The fact that David, then, must have been pretty close to Uriah, was new to me. Did that mean David knew Bathsheba as well?

Uriah was also a Hittite. Though the Hittite Empire had ended by 1200 B.C., pockets of ethnic Hittites continued to exist in Syria and even Israel.

5. Does knowing that David probably knew Bathsheba change anything in the story?

When David called to her, the text says, “she came to him.” Some argue that means she willingly slept with him. I would question that argument because the text doesn’t mention “why” she went to him at all. Maybe she just wanted to see what he wanted. Maybe she felt obligated since he was the King, and didn’t feel like she could say no. Perhaps she thought he had news of her husband who was out at battle. In any case, we aren’t able to discern anything about her character at this point.

6. Verse 4 tells us she was bathing as part of a ritual cleansing after her monthly period, as was the custom. (Lev. 12:2-5; 15:19-28) This also may have let David know that he could have sex with her. Why else do you think the Holy Spirit inserts that fact in the text?

7. If Bathsheba was innocent in this (which is the opinion I happen to hold), how do you think she felt when she found out she was pregnant after being molested/raped?

8. Remember that Bathsheba was violated by a “righteous and Godly” man. Do you think that would have added insult to injury?

I think it’s safe to assume that we’ve all been hurt by other “Godly and righteous” people. (Friendly fire is the worst, right?) I think we expect more of our brothers and sisters in Christ. But honestly, people are people. And Christians hurt each other often. The answer is always the same, no matter who does the hurting. Confession, repentance, and forgiveness is the road to reconciliation. The link between sin and restoration comes when David admits his sin after Nathan confronts him, which we’ll read about later. God calls the powerful to abide by the same moral standard as the weak, because He is not a respecter of persons (Deut. 10:17).

9. Have you ever been hurt by an influential leader? What did you do? How did you handle it?

10. Have you ever been the one who did the “hurting”? Did you repent and ask for forgiveness?

11. When Bathsheba found out she was pregnant, she told David right away. Do you think that was wise or unwise? Why?

That’s it for today. We’ll continue looking into Bathsheba’s life tomorrow. Wouldn’t it be interesting if people were going through OUR lives with a fine-tooth comb? Hmm ...

Third Day

Work on your verse. Rejoice that He is a forgiving God!

1. Read over our story again, focusing on verses 6-27. When David gets the news about the baby, what does he decide to do? Why?

2. Does Uriah fall for the bait?

3. Contrast the king’s despicable behavior with that of the “wronged” Hittite, Uriah. (The text seems to emphasize the fact that Uriah was a “Hittite.” Why?)

4. Some believe that Uriah knew of the situation; that someone may have informed him, which is why he reacted as he did. Does anything in the text support that argument?

5. After Uriah was killed, what did Bathsheba do? What may she have been feeling? First the king violates her, and now her husband is killed? (Do you think she even knew of David's plan?)

6. Although she is never called a sinner, etc., David sure was. What does verse 27 say? Also read 1 Kings 15:5.

7. Bathsheba was also listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:6. How does it refer to her?

About a year passed and David "seemed" to get away with his deceit and evil plot. Although he thinks he was covering his sin, Psalm 32 and 51 describe David's feelings during that time. Weirsbe wrote, "He became weak and physically sick; he lost his joy; he lost his witness; he lost his power. God gave David plenty of time to make things right, but he persisted in hiding his sins. Had he come to the Lord on his own, in sincere repentance, things might have been different later on. But finally God sent Nathan the prophet, not with a message of blessing as in 2 Samuel chapter 7, but with a message of conviction. How easy it is to be convicted about other people's sins! But Nathan was fearless as he approached David."

8. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-6. Summarize the parable Nathan told David. How do you think it related to David and Bathsheba?

9. How did David respond in verses 5-6?

The details in Nathan's story were obviously intended to evoke compassion and incite moral outrage on the part of the man who was authorized to right the wrong! David takes the bait and is outraged, to the extent that he declares that the offender is worthy of death!

10. Nathan honestly points the finger at David as the offender. What does he say?

11. David could have had Nathan killed, but instead, how did he respond in verses 13-14?

David's response is very admirable. He accepts the rebuke without hesitation. After declaring judgment on the offender in the parable, he owns his own sin, uttering a confession and taking full responsibility for it. He doesn't blame anyone else and accepts the rebuke. Nathan had prophesied some terrible things that David would have to suffer as a consequence of his sin. God was ready to forgive David's sins, but He would not prevent those sins from "bringing forth death." (James 1:15) Weirsbe wrote, "God's grace forgives, but God's government must allow sinners to reap what they sow. (Psalm 99:8) David had declared punishment concerning the man in Nathan's story, so God accepted his sentence. The sword never did depart from David's household: the baby died; Absalom killed Amnon, who had ruined Tamar (Chap. 13); then Joab killed Absalom (18:9-17); and Adonijah was slain by Benaiah (1 Kings 2:24-25). Fourfold! Add to these trials the awful ruin of Tamar, the shameful treatment of David's wives by Absalom (12:11; 16:20-23), plus the rebellion of Absalom, and you can see that David paid dearly for a few moments of lustful pleasure. He sowed lust and reaped the same; he sowed murder and reaped murders, for 'whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.'" (Galatians 6:7) **It's important to remember that God's forgiveness does not necessarily mean we always escape the natural consequences of our sin.**

12. God called David "a man after My own heart" in 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22. How could God say this, given the awful things he did to Bathsheba and Uriah? Does that confuse you or encourage you?

13. Why do you think God allows us to experience consequences, even when He forgives us?

I know that God's grace is sometimes hard to grasp. Our hearts may feel conflicted that God would continue to use this man after he committed such dreadful sins, yet we are also the first to desire and appreciate His grace towards us when we radically mess up. God's grace and

forgiveness knows no bounds. He is near to those with a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17); He has a heart ready to forgive (Psalm 86:5); He blots out our transgressions and remembers them no more (Isaiah 43:25-26). He simply blows my mind!

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

There's so much application from this story regarding David that I hope you're not missing, but I'm really going to try to keep focused on Bathsheba, which is a little bit difficult since Scripture is so silent on her feelings. But let's try, shall we?

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:15-25. God's judgment was swift, just as Nathan promised. Summarize the story.
2. Although it was prophesied that the baby would die, David continued to pray for the child. Why?
3. Good question I stole from Ann Spangler ... What do you think Bathsheba was doing and feeling while her son got sick and died? Why do you think the Bible focuses on David's response rather than hers?
4. Although it appears that Bathsheba may have been an innocent victim in this, she suffers a great loss. What lesson do we see in this story regarding the effect our sins have on others?

David and Bathsheba were graced with the birth of another boy who found favor with the Lord. His name was Solomon and he was marked as God's nominee to succeed David on the throne. The prophet Nathan confirms God's calling on the child by naming him Jedidiah ("Beloved of the Lord"), which occurs nowhere else. To me, this was a sign of God's forgiveness and pardon towards David, and a blessing for Bathsheba because it placed her in the genealogy of Jesus. What an honor!

Bathsheba raised Solomon in the ways of the Lord, causing Solomon to himself write, "Train up a child in the way they should go" in Proverbs 22:6. Lockyer wrote, "Tradition says that it was Bathsheba who composed Proverbs 31, as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage. If this be so, we can understand all the warnings against the flatteries of strange women with which Proverbs abounds."

10. Does Bathsheba show any signs of living with a "victim mind-set"? How do you think she rose above that tendency?

11. We've talked about the tendency to live with this mind set more than once, but it's worth asking again. If you've been a victim of some sort, do you struggle with seeing yourself as one, or do you strive to live as one who is victorious? What's the danger of finding your identity in being a victim?

Scripture goes silent regarding Bathsheba until Solomon gets older, which we'll read about tomorrow. For now, ponder the strength Bathsheba must have had to endure the things she experienced in her life. I'd love to think she penned Proverbs 31 for her son Solomon, since it would give us more insight into who she was. Whoever penned that truly loved the Lord and understood the danger of following the wrong path.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Years passed, and Bathsheba and King David grew older. We don't hear anything about her life but we know she lived in a royal harem and gave David other sons. In David's old age, his servants brought him a beautiful woman named Abishag the Shunammite to help take care of his final needs. (There's a longer explanation for that, but will have to wait for another time!)

1. Read 1 Kings 1:1-40. Summarize the story, focusing on Bathsheba's role. What was Adonijah, David's other son, trying to do? What did Nathan encourage Bathsheba to do?
2. Did Bathsheba still seem to be important to David, although he had many other wives at the time?
3. Bathsheba knew that Solomon was God's choice to succeed David on the throne (1 Chronicles 22:6-19, 23:1). How did she use her influence on King David to secure the throne for her son Solomon?

David had given up the sword (2 Samuel 21:15-17) and now he must give up the scepter. He knew Solomon was God's pick for the throne. Adonijah, David's son from Haggith (2 Samuel 3:4) fled ... for a short time. I read something interesting from Beth Moore concerning this. She wrote, "I can't help but wonder what emotions filled Bathsheba. The crown would be taken from her husband and placed on the head of her son. Did she feel sadness and joy? Mourning and celebration? Bathsheba wanted nothing more than for Solomon to receive the crown, but was she prepared for David to have to lose it in order for Solomon to gain it? Being wife and mother can sometimes feel like two exclusives roles tearing one woman in half."

4. Write your thoughts on the above paragraph.

If we skip ahead a few chapters, we see that Adonijah's political aspirations didn't end when Solomon took over as king. He still believed the people wanted him as king. After his father died, he made his move. In 1 Kings 2:13-46, to recapture the throne, he asks that he be allowed to marry Abishag, his dead father's last lady friend. In ancient culture, a marriage between Adonijah and Abishag would show royal succession and provide a reason for Adonijah to challenge Solomon's right to the throne. He used Bathsheba to ask for permission.

5. Read 1 Kings 2:13-25. Why do you think Bathsheba went to Solomon and made the request? Do you think she felt bad for him not inheriting the throne? Or do you think she knew the custom and knew that Solomon would order his execution? Thoughts?

Some think she did this ignorantly, not really understanding the depth and seriousness of what he was asking. But I for one think Bathsheba was wise and knew exactly what she was doing. She had been around the block (or the palace) a time or two and had to be politically “savvy.” After all, she was “Queen Mother.”

Kathy Collard Miller wrote, “Together David and Bathsheba had five sons. Bathsheba provides us with an inspirational example of a resourceful woman who worked with God to bring something good from a terrible experience.”

Ann Spangler wrote, “But why did Bathsheba have to suffer along with the man who molested her and murdered her husband? Though the story gives us little insight into her true character, it is hardly likely that Bathsheba was in a position to refuse the king. In Nathan’s parable, in fact, she is depicted as an innocent lamb. Why, then, have so many people painted her as a seductress? Perhaps Bathsheba’s innocence is too painful to face. That a good person can suffer tragedies, especially at the hands of a godly person, appalls us. Worse yet, God punishes both David and Bathsheba by taking their son. If we can believe that Bathsheba had an affair with David, we could accept her suffering more easily; her guilt would make David’s sin seem less grave and God’s punishment less cruel. Though Bathsheba may not have understood the reasons for her suffering, God gave her favor with King David, making her both a powerful queen and the mother of David’s successor, Solomon, who became famous for his great wisdom.”

Let’s end our lesson with a few summarizing questions:

6. What are some of the lessons you learned from the life of Bathsheba?
7. What are some of the lessons you learned about sin from David?
8. Do you have a “Nathan” in your life? Are you someone’s Nathan?