

## DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

## STUDY SEVENTEEN

## Confrontation!

*2 Samuel 12:1–15*

*We're living in a day of great compromise. And I want you to learn a lesson from Nathan as a confronter—that God's standard has not changed. Though the eras pass and lifestyles change, He is still holy.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**D**AVID was a great man. God even called him a man after His own heart. Yet, David was a *sinner*. Reminders of this painful reality swarmed David like furious locusts—from every conversation with his new bride Bathsheba to every military briefing with his commander Joab.

David may have been guilty of lust, murder, hypocrisy, and deception, but *no one knew* . . . or so David thought. As naïve as it may seem, David thought the future looked bright. He could return to serving as Israel's noble king by hiding his dark past in the shadows.

But David couldn't hide his sin from God.

David's heart wasn't so hard that he was immune to feelings of guilt or shame. So, God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David, to soften his heart, and to awaken his conscience. Would David listen to the words of this courageous friend?

This *Searching the Scriptures* study joins the prophet in the throne room to witness his confrontation of the king. Their interaction teaches important lessons about confronting evil, confessing sin, accepting forgiveness, and embracing repentance.



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## Confrontation!

2 Samuel 12:1–15



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

King David wrote many songs reflecting on this dark season of his life. Despite David's sin, these psalms shine with the hope of God's mercy. Pray the words of *Psalms 32:1–2, 5* as you begin your study today.

Oh, what joy for those  
whose disobedience is forgiven,  
whose sin is put out of sight!  
Yes, what joy for those  
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,  
whose lives are lived in complete honesty! . . .  
Finally, I confessed all my sins to you  
and stopped trying to hide my guilt.  
I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD."  
And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Two things stand out about David's many sins displayed in *2 Samuel 11*. First, he sinned *willfully*. David knew it was wrong to stay behind in the palace while his men fought on the battlefield. He had a plan when he sent messengers to inquire about Bathsheba. He carefully devised a scheme to remove Uriah. These weren't accidental choices. They were deliberate.

Second, David sinned *in secret*. Being the most prominent figure in Israel awarded him certain privileges like privacy, and he abused this privacy to feed the fire of his own fleshly desires. As the fire grew, David needed to sin more and more to keep it satisfied . . . and quiet.

Yet the account ends with somber words: "But the LORD was displeased with what David had done" (*2 Samuel 11:27*). David couldn't keep his secrets from his omniscient God, and in *2 Samuel 12*, God exposed David's sins through the prophet Nathan.



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### Observation: Nathan's Confrontation

Nathan could have gone straight to David and enumerated all his sins, but David likely would have turned defensive and shunned Nathan before listening to his words. So the prophet approached his king wisely, first sharing the words of a story—a parable—rather than pointing his finger in accusation.

Read [2 Samuel 12](#). Carefully consider what it says.<sup>1</sup>

#### A Parable—2 Samuel 12:1–4

Who were the two main characters in Nathan's story introduced in [2 Samuel 12:1](#)? How did Nathan demonstrate the difference between these two characters in [12:2–3](#)?

According to [12:3](#), how did the poor man treat his lone sheep?

When a guest came to the home of the rich man in [12:4](#), how did he feed his guest?

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*No prophet was ever given a more difficult commission than Nathan. He was to stand before the most powerful man in the nation and tell him what no one else around the place would.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

### An Accusation—2 Samuel 12:5–15

According to [2 Samuel 12:5](#), how did David react when Nathan finished telling the story? According to [12:6](#), what punishment did he think the rich man deserved?

After David's outburst, Nathan turned the condemning finger back at David declaring, "You are that man!" ([12:7](#)). This statement is the interpretive key that unlocks the symbolism of the parable. According to [12:7–10](#), what did each image in the parable represent?

Rich man: \_\_\_\_\_

Poor man: \_\_\_\_\_

Rich man's many sheep: \_\_\_\_\_

Poor man's lone sheep: \_\_\_\_\_

According to [12:11–14](#), what consequences would David face for his sin? How do these consequences correspond with David's outburst in [12:6](#)?



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What did David say in 2 Samuel 12:13 in response to Nathan's confrontation? What did Nathan say in return?

David knew that Nathan had exposed his secret. David couldn't hide his sin anymore. Rather than lying, hiding, or blame-shifting, David confessed his sin. In turn, God offered forgiveness—just like the apostle John later said: “But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).



### Interpretation: David's Repentance

The interpretation phase of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method uses what the text says to determine what it means. Good interpretation produces theological principles that remain true and valuable for God's people across time.

Many Old Testament narratives reveal timeless truths about the character of God. Based on the encounter between David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 12, what did you learn about God and His attributes?



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In the space below, write one or two timeless truths about confronting sin.

Now, write one or two timeless truths about genuine repentance.

David didn't have to say much to show his genuine repentance. Thankfully, God preserved in one beautiful psalm more of David's reaction to his conversation with Nathan.



### Correlation: A Psalm of Repentance

After his confrontation with Nathan, David likely returned to his chambers seeking solitude from everyone other than God. He needed to get right with Him first and foremost. He may have prayed for a few minutes or a few hours. Maybe he even wept. Though these details remain unknown, David did record part of his prayer to God in *Psalms* 51.



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At several points in this psalm, David asked God to forgive his sins. According to *Psalms 51:1*, why did David believe that God would show him mercy?

Although David sinned against many people in the episode with Bathsheba and Uriah, who was ultimately offended by his wicked actions, according to *51:4*?

According to *51:16–17*, what “sacrifice” did David offer to atone for the sins he committed against God? What do these verses teach about true, heartfelt repentance?

No animal sacrifice is enough to pay the price of sin. But because of His mercy, God offered a perfect sacrifice—His own Son—on behalf of a sinful humanity. Jesus has done all the work. All you need to do is accept with open arms the gift of forgiveness.



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### Application: Confrontation and Repentance Today

Pastor Chuck has developed two points of application based on Nathan's confrontation and David's repentance.

First, for confrontation to be effective, four qualities must be present:

1. *Absolute truth*
2. *Right timing*
3. *Wise words*
4. *Fearless courage*

Is there someone in your life who's currently shackled by his or her own sin? Your confrontation very well may be one of the keys that releases him or her from bondage. Using the four guidelines above, write out what you might say to confront this person courageously and lovingly. Ask God for His guidance and an opportunity to have a fruitful conversation.

*If God calls you to confront sin, don't explain it away. Call it what it is. Call it sin. People long for the message of God. One of my prayers is that He will raise up a generation that will declare the truth—people who say what God has said and say it without fear.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll





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Second, for repentance to be genuine, four characteristics must be evident:

1. *Open, unguarded admission*
2. *Desire to make a complete break from sin*
3. *A broken and humble spirit*
4. *Claiming God's forgiveness and reinstatement*

In Scripture, repentance refers to the changing of one's mind. The term paints the picture of someone walking down the path of sin and turning around to run in the entirely opposite direction toward righteousness . . . toward God. What path of sin has your life followed recently? What would it look like to turn around and run toward God?

Through Nathan's courageous confrontation, God took David at his lowest moment and brought him down to his knees in humble repentance. God wants to do the same with all His children—hopefully before they sink as low as David did. The Holy Spirit often convicts through a faithful friend like Nathan and even through the words of Scripture.



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### A FINAL PRAYER

In the space below, ask God to deliver you from whatever temptation you may feel creeping close, and ask Him to prepare you to stand strong the next time sin knocks at your heart's door.

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

