



HOLY CONFRONTATION

*When You Love Enough to Call it
Out*

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HOLY CONFRONTATION

When You Love Enough to Call it Out

READ 2 Samuel 11-12:1-7.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky once wrote, “Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others.” He’s right—it seems that our ability to deceive ourselves may be one of humanity’s most stunning achievements. There appears to be no limit to the ways we can justify our behavior within our own minds.

The story of David’s “sin spiral” in 2 Samuel 11–12 is a bit like watching a pile-up on the interstate—one disaster leads to another. David digs himself deeper and deeper into the ground with every decision he makes. All the while, we are appalled, but can’t seem to look away.

The narrator gives us a clue rather early in the story that this isn’t going to go well. It appears that David wasn’t doing what kings should do: he was enjoying the comforts of home while his men were off fighting his battles.

“In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem,” (2 Sam. 11:1 NLT, emphasis added).

Sin often begins when we convince ourselves that the rules don’t apply to us. That’s where it started for David. We won’t recount all the ugly details of how he slept with another man’s wife, tried to cover it up, and eventually had the husband killed. When the prophet Nathan comes on the scene and tells David a parable (2 Sam. 12:1–4), we all see what’s coming. David, however, appears clueless, and goes on a righteous-sounding rant about what a horrible thing the person in the parable had done. Then Nathan drops the hammer: “You are that man!” (v. 7).

What’s important for us is this: David’s story is a powerful reminder of how deeply we can deceive ourselves—not only because it happened to David, *but also because it acts as a mirror for us*. Have you ever sat down to get a haircut and looked in the mirror on the wall, only to notice the reflection of the mirror on the wall behind you, which was in turn reflecting the mirror in front of you, and on and on? That’s what this story does: it lets us look in a mirror by looking at a mirror.

When Nathan tells David the parable, he’s holding up a mirror before David. David doesn’t realize it, which makes the moment the “hammer drops” extra rich. However, we should realize that when we read the story of David, *it is acting as a parable for our own behavior too*. It serves as our mirror. We feel indignant toward David for the horrible things he

did. However, before we walk away, we must also have our own “hammer” moment. This is, at some level, our story as well. We are that man or woman. Lying to ourselves is deeply ingrained in us, just like it was with David.

This is not to say that we’ve all done the exact things that David did. But before we get too self-congratulatory, we would do well to ask ourselves how we’re more like David than we realize. The bottom line is this: we *need* others in our lives to call us out. Until the “Nathans” in our lives take us to task, we’ll continue to deceive ourselves, just like David. We should not only welcome, but build into our lives, opportunities for this sort of *holy confrontation*.

Who is your “Nathan?” Who can give you the gift of holy confrontation? While such a thing may sound uncomfortable, know that few things form a tighter bond than having that level of trust with someone. When someone *knows* who we are, but loves us anyway, it is a priceless gift.

Speaking of gifts, after Nathan confronted David, David went on to pen one of the most powerful chapters of the Bible: Psalm 51. It may be that few have sinned more flagrantly than David, but it’s also true that few have repented more earnestly. Perhaps this is what the Bible means when it calls David a man after God’s own heart. David wasn’t perfect; he was repentant when he realized he’d fallen short. Take a moment and pray slowly through each line of the Psalm, and learn the art of repentance from a man who knew what it meant to be broken.

Psalm 51

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.

2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.

4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

5 For I was born a sinner-- yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

6 But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there.

7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me-- now let me rejoice.

9 Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

11 Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you.

- 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.
- 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you.
- 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.
- 18 Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit-- with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. "Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others." How have you found this to be true?
2. The essay refers to David's sin with Bathsheba (and the other sins surrounding it) as a "sin spiral." What might this mean? Have you ever observed sin spiraling out of control before? Why do you suppose this tendency is there?
3. "Sin often begins when we convince ourselves that the rules don't apply to us." What are some common scenarios where we start to believe that the rules don't apply to us?
4. What does it mean to say that this story is like "looking at a mirror by looking at a mirror?" 5. What is "holy confrontation?" How is it a gift?
6. Have you ever had a moment of "holy confrontation" where someone called you out on something? What was your reaction?
7. Who is your "Nathan?" How might you build opportunities for holy confrontation into your life?