

# Lesson 7: Be Faithful

## The Story of David and Bathsheba

We've met King David before, back when we talked about the third commandment—honor the Sabbath. David was a really important king and really, person, in Israel's history. So this story is about him, and a woman named Bathsheba, and about the kind of damage sin can do.

David's armies were at war with one of the surrounding kingdoms one season, and while David was usually the kind of warrior leader to be there, he'd gotten older. He was also the king, so he could do what he wanted. Instead of joining the army in the war, David stayed in Jerusalem. There wasn't a whole lot to do in Jerusalem, even for a king, so he spent a lot of his time wandering around the palace in the evenings. Well, one evening he happened to spot this beautiful woman on a roof nearby.

Now, one of the things about being the king, especially in David's day, was that he had a lot of power to do whatever he wanted, pretty much. When he saw this woman on the roof, he immediately wanted her. So he called up his servants and told them to bring her to him. The woman's name was Bathsheba, and she was put in this impossible position, because she really didn't have a choice to say no, I'd rather not come over. She came with the servants, David dazzled her as this king calling on Bathsheba, and he slept with her.

It was already bad, but that's when things went really wrong.

It was bad enough that David wasn't married to Bathsheba (and in fact, David already had a wife). But on top of that, Bathsheba was married to one of David's most loyal soldiers, a guy named Uriah, who was off fighting that war that David decided not to attend. So David, a married man, slept with Bathsheba, a married woman, breaking all kinds of vows. Then, to top it all off, a little while later he finds out that Bathsheba is pregnant, and he is the only person who could be the father. David, even though he's king and can do what he wants, also doesn't want Uriah to find out what he'd done.

David came up with a plan. He sent a letter to the war, calling Uriah to come back to Jerusalem. Uriah came back, and after a welcome home party with David, David urged Uriah to go home to his wife—that way, he could claim that Bathsheba was actually pregnant with Uriah's child, not his. The only problem was that Uriah was a really good and loyal soldier, who decided not to go home, because his fellow soldiers couldn't go home to their wives. David had to come up with another plan.

Uriah was sent back to the war the next day, along with a letter to his commander. The letter was written by King David, ordering the commander to put Uriah in a dangerous place in

the battle and make sure he didn't make it home. It was definitely not David's finest moment. And in fact, the commander followed the orders, Uriah was put too close to the walls of the city they were besieging, and he was killed.

Because of the one sin of David deciding he wanted Bathsheba, he ended up committing even greater sin by having Uriah killed. If he had just been faithful, and recognized the need to honor Uriah and Bathsheba's faithfulness to each other, all of this could have been avoided. But David broke the commandment not to commit adultery, and because of it, he caused a lot of suffering.

## **What it means not to commit adultery**

The sixth commandment is "you shall not commit adultery." Now, "adultery" is not a word we use very often, and I imagine y'all haven't heard it a lot outside of church, if at all. But the easiest way to think of it is as a synonym for cheating on someone. It's more than that, but essentially, adultery is when you are cheating on someone with someone else. But, like all the other commandments we'll look at, following this commandment is about more than just not cheating on someone. It's also a commandment about being faithful.

See, God gave us the gift of sex as a way to express love for another person on an entirely different level. It's a way that two people can share each other's whole selves. It's deeply intimate, and deeply holy. But that kind of expression of love, like most expressions of love, can also be dangerous when it is misused. When we treat sex lightly, like it's no big deal to sleep around or something like that, it can cause a lot of deep hurt.

That's why God gave us the gift of marriage—as a kind of safe place where we can have the kind of deep vulnerability and whole-self sharing that sex is. And marriage is built around promises of faithfulness and loyalty so that that kind of space of trust can be made between two people.

Adultery is when the trust that kind of vulnerability needs is broken. When one person breaks those promises they made, it's a harm that is more than just lying. It's violating the truly sacred space that two people have shared only with each other. Adultery is on the list of the Ten Commandments because making sure marriage is a space where both people can open up their whole selves and love each other fully is important to God. Marriage is supposed to not just be a place where two people can share that kind of faithfulness with one another, but also an example to the world of what faithfulness is supposed to look like.

We can read this commandment as applying to more than just sex and marriage. Martin Luther put following the commandment this way: "we are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse." This commandment is about faithfulness—being true to your word and keeping your promises,

or “leading pure and decent lives” as Luther said. You can show that kind of faithfulness to other people in your life, too. People know you’re a good friend when you do what you say you’ll do, or when you keep a promise. When you’re loyal, you inspire trust in others to trust you. When you take your promises seriously, when you are true to your word, you are fulfilling this commandment.

And on the flipside, this commandment means helping others keep their promises. It can be really tempting to break promises sometimes, or go back on your word, but by helping others keep their commitments, you’re fulfilling this commandment. That means encouraging a friend to follow through on a promise, or helping someone do what they said they’d do. It doesn’t have to be huge, heroic things all the time either; reminding your sibling to set their alarm so they wake up for work on time is helping them keep their promise to be on time for things, and so is convincing a friend not to mess around behind their girlfriend or boyfriend’s back.

### **How does it affect the real world?**

The thing about faithfulness and loyalty is that it doesn’t get to be centered on you. One of the hardest parts about following this commandment is that everything in television, on the internet, and everywhere else is that the world keeps insisting that it needs to be about *you*. But it’s not just about you. This commandment is a reminder to look outside of yourself, and if more people did that, my would the world change.

Think of the contrast between David and Uriah. David wasn’t faithful or trustworthy because he not only cheated by sleeping with Bathsheba (Uriah’s wife), but he worked so hard to cover up his sin that he ended up having a man killed. Compare that to Uriah, who was so loyal to his fellow soldiers that he wouldn’t even go home to his wife because he knew his fellow soldiers couldn’t do the same. The difference between them was their commitment to faithfulness and loyalty.

We follow this commandment, to be faithful and loyal, so that the world can see what it looks like to care about something outside of yourself, like Uriah cared for his fellow soldiers. Being faithful to your word goes against the grain of only doing what’s good for you, and shifts the focus to whether things are good for your neighbor or not. Think of the other commandments we’ve looked at. Faithfulness to others makes not stealing and not killing, and their positive flipside, a lot easier to follow. And by being faithful, and showing others that you’re faithful, they will be more willing to trust you.

And the thing about trust is that it is more valuable than anything else. When people truly trust you, they are willing to help you, be helped by you, and listen to you. If we all took the commandment seriously to be faithful and loyal to others, we would be far more willing to trust each other; and if we trusted each other, we would be so much more willing to work

together to make the world a better place without constantly worrying someone was just in it for themselves, ready to drop us all at a moment's notice. Being faithful and loyal lays the foundation for doing all the other things God calls on us to do.

## **Closing**

To review:

1. We heard the story of David and Bathsheba, and how not following this commandment can have really awful consequences.
2. We learned about what it means not to commit adultery, and how we're called to help others be faithful as well.
3. We learned that the commandment not to commit adultery means we change the world by modeling faithfulness and loyalty to the world.