

L E S S O N 1 0

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Nathan Condemns David

Julia and Kaitlin attend the same high school. Julia is athletic and is a gymnast and captain of the cheerleading squad. Kaitlin is rather frail and has never played any sports. Julia is outgoing and popular. Kaitlin is shy and mostly overlooked by her peers. Julia is both headstrong and confident. Kaitlin is both yielding and timid. Julia has a broad circle of friends, and everyone in school knows who she is. Kaitlin has a miniscule circle of friends made up of other “misfits.”

One morning as she was walking into school, Julia saw a group of students standing in a circle joking and laughing about what was happening in front of them. Getting closer, she heard a scream that was almost immediately muffled out. She ran and pushed her way through the group to get to the middle of what was going on: Kaitlin was being held down by a bigger, stronger girl; every time she tried to scream for help the other girl shoved her face into the ground.

Julia grabbed the back of the girl’s shirt, pulled her off of Kaitlin, and practically slung her into the crowd of onlookers. Giving them all a piercing look, she yelled, “Why didn’t any of you idiots step in to stop this?” Then she lifted Kaitlin to her feet and accompanied her to the bathroom where she helped her get cleaned up.

The day after that, Julia made a point of finding Kaitlin to check on how she was doing. The day after that, Julia asked her if she was going to be at the basketball game on Friday night. And after the game, Julia asked her if she would like to attend church with her on Sunday.

- 1. What types of injustices have you seen?*
- 2. Have you stopped anyone from suffering an injustice?*
- 3. What should a Christian’s response to injustice be?*

LESSON FOCUS: Challenge injustice when you encounter it.

A Tale of Injustice

2 Samuel 12:1-4, KJV

1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

David had sinned by intentionally having a man killed and then taking his wife. Bathsheba was now David's wife, but the consequences of the affair were far from over. The Lord would bring judgment on David for what He had done.

The prophet Nathan had been with David a long time and knew the king well. But Nathan was no fool either. David could have Nathan executed for condemning the adultery.

So Nathan decided to take a different approach with David. The prophet devised a fictional parable that the king would believe was true, but one that would expose the darkness of the king's soul.

The characters in Nathan's story were two men, one rich,

2 Samuel 12:1-4, NIV

¹The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴"Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

one very poor. The rich man had hundreds if not thousands of sheep, in addition to abundant cattle. The poor man had nothing more than a little lamb he had bought with his hard earned money. He allowed it to grow up with his children. More than likely this lamb had become a family pet that they would never even consider eating or even sacrificing. However when the rich man welcomed a guest to his home, he did not take from the surplus of his livestock, but snatched away the young lamb from the poor man and his family, and then served that meat to his guest.

Little did David know, but the shrewd prophet was using this parable to set the king up for self-condemnation.

4. *Why did Nathan take the route of telling David a parable in order to expose the king's wrongdoing?*

5. *What injustice did Nathan's story portray that also reflected the king's immoral behavior?*

You Are the Man!

2 Samuel 12:5-9, KJV

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that

2 Samuel 12:5-9, NIV

⁵David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

⁷Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and

KJV

had been too little, I would more-over have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

NIV

Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. "Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

David's reaction to Nathan's fictional story was one of fury and outrage. Why would David get so upset about a relatively minor infraction of one powerful man against another? What seemed to bother David so much was the apparent imbalance of power behind this particular injustice. The poor man had no recourse, no way to hold this man accountable. To take advantage of such a powerless individual was a deep moral and egregious outrage in the heart of the king.

But after saying the wealthy man should die, the king seemed to backtrack a little bit. Instead of paying with his life, the wealthy man needed to compensate the poor man for the lamb four times over, perhaps alluding to what the law said about compensation for a loss.

But the prophet Nathan shocked David when he said "You are the man!" David was guilty of the very thing for which he has condemned the fictional wealthy man.

Nathan summarized everything that God had done for David. God not only saved David from Saul, but gave David what Saul had accumulated, even his wives. If David had asked for more, the Lord would have willingly given it to him. However, the king, in his arrogance and power, saw himself as being above the law and violated the wife of another man. Of course, the Lord considered this inexcusable.

6. *What infuriated David about the wealthy man's actions?*

7. *What did God point out to David?*

Confession and Repentance

2 Samuel 12:13-15, KJV

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

2 Samuel 12:13-15, NIV

¹³Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ¹⁴But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die."

¹⁵After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill.

Once the true intentions of Nathan had been revealed, David repented immediately. He realized that he had just spelled out his own condemnation. Instead of justifying his actions as an all-powerful king, David humbled himself and said that he had sinned against the Lord.

But the Lord made it absolutely clear through the prophet Nathan what David had done. Not only had he taken a little lamb from a faithful and loyal soldier, but when he failed to cover up the consequences of his horrible behavior, he had the woman's husband killed. The Lord tells David that he even used his enemies to take the life of this faithful man and soldier. The king did not even have the courage to do it himself.

The end of this tragic story does result in David's redemption, but at great cost. The child that was born to David and Bathsheba died shortly after he was born.

8. *What was David's immediate response to Nathan's "revelation" here?*

9. *What would be the severe consequence of David's sin, even though the Lord had forgiven him?*

The Black Church Confronts Injustice

The black church has been a tower of strength and a lighthouse for the black community since the time the United States was founded. The first black church began as a challenge to the injustice of discrimination when Absalom Jones and Richard Allen courageously refused to sit at the back of a church in Philadelphia that they had helped start and grow.

Women such as Jarena Lee also blazed a trail for black women and their rights. Lee met Allen, who at first would not let her in the pulpit, but later was convinced by the Holy Spirit to authorize her to preach. Lee challenged the church and its stand against women preaching and the negative view of black women in society, where they were thought to be fit only for serving and scrubbing floors. Black pastors such as the Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen not only preached against slavery before the Civil War, but he also helped slaves escape via the Underground Railroad.

The Civil War and the 13th Amendment ended slavery, but the black church still had to fight for equal rights for everyone. During the Civil Rights era, the church was the hub to get your marching orders for the next organized march or protest against racist Jim Crow laws. Ministers such as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the way like a new Moses. Rev. King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Today, the church continues to be that anchor in the community and its saving grace. Currently, many black churches provide food drives, polling places, after-school childcare, and other pertinent services for the community while continuing to fight against injustice. Churches want to call for the powerful in society to bring equality and justice to all people.

10. *Why does injustice linger even after people have pointed it out?*

11. *What are at least three things you need to be an effective challenger of injustices?*

12. *Why should the Church be the first to stand up against injustices?*

Take the Challenge

It is a lot easier to turn the other way when we see or experience an injustice. It is often believed that someone else is more qualified, stronger, or just better suited for the risk. South African Anglican cleric and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Desmond Tutu said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” If you are neutral about injustice, it is time to change. It’s time to take the challenge to confront injustice in all levels of society. Jesus did.

► *Pray about an injustice you have encountered that still needs to change. Ask God to help you act immediately and responsively to the injustice in a way that glorifies Him.*

KEY VERSE

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

—2 Samuel 12:7a, KJV

Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!”

—2 Samuel 12:7a, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of February 7 through February 13

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Psalm 19—God’s Law Is Perfect.

Tue. Joshua 1:1-9—Meditate Continuously on the Law.

Wed. 1 John 3:18-24—Obey God’s Commandments.

Thu. Psalm 119:1-16—Teach Me Your Statutes.

Fri. Psalm 119:97-112—How I Love Your Law!

Sat. Ezra 7:11-22—The King’s Letter to Ezra.

Sun. Ezra 7:1-10, 23-26—Ezra Leads the Exiles Home.