

2 Samuel 11:1-15ⁱⁱ

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the

hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."

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In another familiar story in the David cycle, David's character begins to unravel. Enamored by the beauty of Bathsheba, the wife of one of his loyal field officers, David abuses his royal power and conceives a child with her. Then, to cover up his crime, he brings Uriah from the front lines in hopes that he will sleep with his wife so everyone will think Bathsheba's child is his.

But Uriah, more loyal than David imagines, does not go to his house while on leave. So to cover up his sin, David gives orders that Uriah should fight in the front line of battle, and then the other fighters abandon him so that he will be killed, which is exactly what happens.

In this incident, several of David's prominent character flaws surface. They illustrate how the "sins of the father" infect family relationships and eventually lead to Solomon's seizure of power. His negligence as a commander, his arrogance toward powerless subordinates, and his eagerness to cover up his sins reinforce the biblical theme that even the greatest heroes have flaws. How they deal with their sins is an important lesson for us to consider.