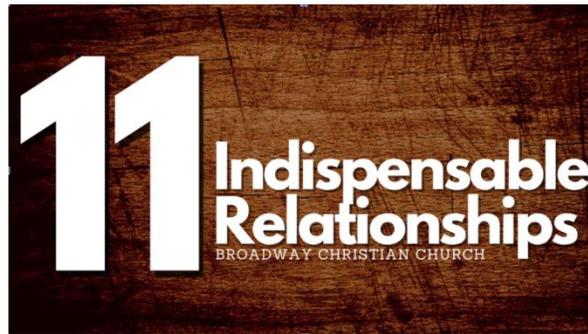


**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**

**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • JUNE 6, 2021**



**The Scripture**  
**2 Samuel 12:1-13**

*And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to David, "Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die.*

**The Message**  
***“11 Indispensable Relationships: You Need an Editor”***  
**Mark Briley**

You don't have to look far to find a George Clooney fan. He's no doctor, but he did play one on television for years. He may be most known for starring in a series of movies playing the character Danny Ocean – a remake of the 1960 Rat Pack Film, *Ocean's 11*. Danny Ocean, fresh out of prison, connects with a character played by Missouri native, Brad Pitt, to think through their next big bust – robbing a Vegas casino. I'm not promoting this film as one with terrific family values, but... there is a link to the sermon series we launch today.



Rusty, Pitt's character, is not convinced that Ocean's casino heist idea is a good one or even possible at all. He says to Clooney's character, *“You'd need at least a dozen guys doing a combination of cons [to even have a chance].”*

*“Like what do you think we'd need?”* Ocean asks.

*“Off the top of my head,”* he replies, *“I'd say you're looking at a Boesky, a Jim Brown, a Miss Daisy, two Jethros, and a Leon Spinks, not to mention the biggest Ella Fitzgerald ever!”*

The point? You'll never make it by yourself. You're gonna need others to get the job done. And this is true for all of us.

We kick off a fun summer series today, and it's not about how you can get a group of people together to start a crime spree. It's about your life. It's about who you're with. Are you a Lone Ranger? Are you a rebel without a cause? Are you always in a hurry to get to some destination you're not even sure exists? Yogi Berra used to say, *“If you don't know where you're going, you might end up some place else.”*

We're always talking about the journey. Ursula LeGuin said it well this way, *“It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.”*

If we polled the room today, I suspect the “*journey-over-destination*” vote would win hands down even though it seems we are so busy living the “*are we there yet?*” lifestyle. We’re always in a mad dash to some finish line. Some deadline. “*When I get there*” ... or “*When I make that money*” or “*When that thing is done...*”

There’s a lot to unpack in that idea but we’re asking a different question this series and that question is simply: “*Who’s with you?*” or the converse “*Who you with?*” This is the bigger question, isn’t it?

In each of our lives there are landmark moments, swing moments when our whole history hinges, turning one way or another. At the heart of these “*landmark*” moments are usually landmark people. Sometimes we call these people game changers, mentors, hiccups, correctors, even strangers that come alongside you for a moment but alter the course of your existence forever. For sake of this series, we’re going to call these people *Witnesses*.

Len Sweet gives us this term and one I’ve long come to love. Before someone can be an authentic *witness* to your life, they need to be *with* you first. A witness may just be someone who sees something from a distance – “*I’m looking at you from the outside.*” A *witness* is someone who sees something *with* you – “*I’m looking with you from the inside.*” The relationship is different. The investment is wholly different. Who are you *witnesses*?

Before Jesus ascends to heaven, he has that parting word with the disciples saying, “*And you shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.*” But that was at the end... after they all had been through so much together. When Jesus appointed 12, Scripture says, he “*designated them apostles that they might be **with** him.*”

I can’t fairly speak of the depths of your life unless I’ve been with you. So, Len Sweet wrote a book entitled, *11 Indispensable Relationships You Can’t Be Without*,<sup>1</sup> and this summer we’ll be diving into these relationships and the impact they have on our lives because? ... our relationships determine the quality and direction of our lives. Grounded in relationships we find in Scripture; we’ll see what we can glean together about the varied people we may need to be for others and how to discover the power of those who are those *witnesses* in our lives.

Our first *witness*? Nathan. Who is your Nathan? You need an editor in your life.

The name Nathan means “*gift*,” and Nathan is a gift to King David... one of his *witnesses*. He was a gift to him in many ways. Nathan is a prophet and has given

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<sup>1</sup> 11: Indispensable relationships you can’t be without. Leonard Sweet. David C. Cook Publishing. Colorado Springs. 2008. This series is grounded in and inspired by Sweet’s work in this book. Any quotes or references to Len Sweet are linked to this work.

expert counsel to David on undoubtedly a variety of issues. David trusts Nathan because he knows he cares, and he has David's best interest at heart. Beyond a friendship, Nathan is a trusted voice of faith in David's life. In 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles, Nathan has another moment with David which caused David to "*sit before the Lord.*"

A Nathan has that trusted edge in your life that even if you wouldn't let on to anyone else that you're really wrestling with some big truth, that Nathan can move you to get in front of God and say, "*Is it true, God? Is it me? What am I missing here?*"

It's not about pointing a finger as many will do from the outside. It's a parting of the curtains from the inside – someone who can get you to really see the truth for yourself. Who is that person in your life that can get your attention enough to slow your roll and get you to sit before the Lord? That person may be your Nathan.

In our passage today, Nathan opens the curtains of David's blinders by telling a story you heard read moments ago. The poor man has one little lamb that he raised from birth like one of his children. The rich man had many flocks and herds and could care less about them – they were just a commodity. A traveler comes through to visit the rich man. The rich man, instead of offering one of his many herd as a meal for his guest takes the one lamb the poor man treasured and serves it up instead.

King David is listening to this story and flips his lid: "*That rich man deserves to die... what a pathetic jerk.*" And of course, the next words are the game changing moment where this editor of David's life speaks up... "*You are the man, David!*" And this isn't a "*You da man!*" kind of slang that we use sometimes. This was a hardcore, call 'em out, "*You are the rich man who has taken from the poor man his one true love.*"

This passage goes on in detail, but if you're wondering where the parabolic truth overlays David's life, you'll find that Nathan is referring to the adulterous affair King David is carrying on with Bathsheba. It's told in the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. David spots her from his balcony, and even after learning that she is the wife of Uriah – one of his troops fighting the war, David sends for her and he sleeps with her. The story spirals downward from there as Bathsheba becomes pregnant with David's child while her husband is off at war, and David tries every way he knows to cover this up.

It's got blockbuster Netflix series written all over it. Ultimately, David sends message to make sure Uriah is abandoned on the war front and killed off by the enemy. King David, chosen by God, labeled as a "*man after God's own heart,*" falls into a terrible pattern of sin, greed, and corruption.

About the time we move into full judgment of David, Len Sweet reminds us: “*You will get lost, too. Let me repeat: You will get lost. We all lose our way. Everyone gets lost for a while.*”

Maybe you’ve been lost before and know it. Maybe you’re lost a bit right now and haven’t fully claimed it so just yet. What David needed was an editor *Withness*, even though he couldn’t see it for himself. Some of the most frightening words of Scripture occur in one single sentence: “*But he did not know that the Lord had left him.*” (Judges 16:20). David was in so deep he couldn’t even realize his spiritual compass had been abandoned. When we get crazy lost in a downward spiral of sin, we can lose sight of God, too... not even realizing we’re out of control. But Nathan is the kind who makes David sit before the Lord.

David holds Nathan’s integrity in high esteem and listens to what he has to say... to the point that David can say, “*Dang it. It is me. I have sinned before the Lord.*” Coming from Nathan, David can hear the truth.

Do you have a Nathan? A Nathan in your life is one who can tell it to you like it is... and even if it’s painful, you know they are bringing it to you out of love... not judgment. This is what an editor does.

Every author has one. They cut up your manuscript like nobody’s business, but you’ve invited them to do so. They know your voice. They know who you are. When they read your work, they want your voice to shine through clearly. An editor is not the same thing as an accountability partner. “*Accountability is designed to prevent you from doing bad. Editability is designed to help you do good.*” (Len Sweet).

You’ll find many a willing volunteer to hold you accountable... people like the job of pointing out your sins... but an editor is more deeply invested. An editor is already an insider – when you go to him or her – when you look in their eyes, you see what you’ve been through together already. The Rolodex of memories of your shared experience is strong. We went through this hard thing, and he propped me up that one time. You don’t have to question that they are *for* you. In this way, your Nathan might best be understood as a welcomed intruder: somebody you invite in your life to help see yourself for real when you can’t even see you clearly yourself. “*What am I missing?*” Your Nathan sees it and will show you in love... even when it’s hard.

How can you identify the editor *withness* in your life? Len Sweet offers a few characteristics to look for. First, a Nathan will get under your skin. Not so much as an irritant though it likely won’t always be flowery of course... but literally under your skin as in getting past the surface and to the heart of things. Your Nathan isn’t there for weather and water cooler chats. Nathan’s can go right to the deep stuff with you.

Without a Nathan, you might get to the end of your life wondering what you could have become if you didn't get in the way of yourself. If you've ever said, "*I wish someone would have told me... made me see,*" you were looking for this editor *withness*. Nathan's part those curtains for you in critically important moments... so you can really see... and the higher you go; the more successful you are; the more responsibility you carry... the more you need a Nathan to keep your spirit, your motives, your integrity in check.

I remember one of my Nathan's standing with me in the church narthex of my student church in Indianapolis. There was a buzz... lots of people roaming around after a big ministry event. Another church person stepped toward us and said some very flattering things about the ministry we were doing and she said to me, "*I don't know what we'd do without you.*" And my Nathan didn't skip a beat. He said, "*We'd go right on!*" Nathan's keep your ego in check, and even as he's joined the resurrection now, I've heard his voice in my spirit many times. Nathan's will get under your skin in all the right ways.

Your Nathan will also ask you some pointed and poignant questions. Questions, by their very definition, are intrusive. Questions comfort us, challenge us, and convict us. An editor in your life will be one who gets you to *sit before the Lord*, look in a mirror and honestly ask, "*Is God's name glorified or smeared in my life?*" An editor is not a fixer but one who asks the right questions so you can come to the conclusion yourself. They will help cultivate a spirit of resiliency within you... because remember, they are on your side. They are not calling you out to judge you. They love you and want you to succeed. If they bail on you when it's tough, they are not your Nathan.

Your Nathan will get to the heart of things. They'll ask the hard questions and finally, a Nathan will always tell you the truth. Truth telling is a major role of an editor. It's not just an all-out truth dump on you all the time. No. Some say that "*Truth dumping can be every bit as cruel as habitual lying.*" Nathans just help you see the very things you are running from.

Sweet says this about truth telling: "*The difficult truth can concern little things. Our sins make us look ridiculous more than anything. Who tells you how ridiculous you look walking around with dandruff on your shoulder or a booger in your beard? Christianity quickly becomes Niceianity, and a Nathan doesn't live on Planet Nice, at least when we're around. You know you've been pricked and prodded by a Nathan when you leave an encounter smarting, but thinking, 'There are kinder words that could have been said to me, but there aren't truer ones.'* Nathan's practice radical honesty even about the little things."

Whether big or small, you know Nathan's will always be up front with you.

Maybe you've picked out your Nathan in your mind already. Are you someone else's editor? Remember, you must earn that right. You don't simply get to choose to be someone's Nathan. But this role is extremely important in helping people become the best version of yourselves. It's why the editor *witness* is one of the 11... because as has been named: you will get lost. There will be times when you lose sight of your God potential. There will be moments when lapsed judgment rears its head. Who will keep you focused? When it's tough, your Nathan will make a huge difference in your life. Just ask King David. He could have scoffed at Nathan's story and accusation... but he sat before the Lord. He listened. And when he could have plugged his ears or said, "Forget you," David chose to be different because of Nathan's wise and earned counsel. Do you remember what David named his son? That's right: *Nathan*.

We're just scratching the surface today as we begin this *witness* journey together. Why would we spend time on this? Because your relationships determine the quality and direction of your life. When it comes to friendship, and relationships of any kind, we are a living soundtrack. Danny Ocean needed his 11, and we need these unique people in our lives, too. The pandemic swept in and through our lives and has challenged the nature of our relationships so this may be a critical time, emerging into a whole new world post-pandemic, to consider who we are walking with and how that impacts our lives.

Sweet says, "*The real meaning of life is not a journey question or an arrival question. It's a relationship question. Your journey and your destination are both important, but neither is possible without an answer to this question: Who are you taking with you on the journey toward your destination?*"

Today – it's Nathan; a trusted, spiritual guide that will help you stay between the needed guardrails in your life. If you don't know who your Nathan is, listen in a new way to the voices in your life. Build trust. Listen well. If you do know who your Nathan is, take time to thank them this week. They are undoubtedly a faithful *witness* that has helped you rise to where you are today. They will remind you that you have not yet arrived... but they will be with you in the press... the press to live into your most fulfilling life.

May it be so. Amen.

**Song of Response**  
***“A Mentor Like You”***  
***Words by Ed Varnum***

**Music: “In the Garden” (GARDEN), Austin Miles 1913**

1. Your words were not easy to hear, but I listened and knew they were wise:  
they were gifts that opened my eyes.

*Refrain:*

And you walked with me, shared your heart with me,  
and you said what I needed to know.  
I thank God for you and your counsel true  
that has blessed me and helped me to grow.

2. It takes someone special, like you, with the insight to speak words of truth,  
with rejection risked if I turned away. I thank God for a mentor like you.

*Refrain:*

And you walked with me, shared your heart with me,  
and you said what I needed to know.  
I thank God for you and your counsel true  
that has blessed me and helped me to grow.