

David and Nathan: Commitment and Confrontation

The relationship between David and Nathan is one of the most discussed examples of honesty and healthy confrontation in the Bible. It is a relationship that displays the absolute necessity of keeping God's standards above all human endeavors and desires. This study aims to help your group understand the history of David's and Nathan's relationship by exploring the dynamics of their long lasting commitment to each other. The study will help your group discuss issues of character, goal-setting, sin, and commitment.

Saturday morning study: History and a High Point

Break your group into smaller groups to help create a biography of these two men. Skim the passages for highlights and themes. David's history is more extensively covered, so more people may want to concentrate on him, with only a few concentrating on Nathan.

David History 101:

In your smaller groups, take a look at each of these passages and note what happened, who was involved, what is the general feel of the passage (victorious, defeating, hopeful...) and what God's role is in the events. Spend 15-20 minutes on this task.

1 Samuel 16

1 Samuel 17

1 Samuel 19

1 Samuel 20

1 Samuel 24

2 Samuel 1:17-2:7

2 Samuel 6

Nathan History 101:

In your smaller groups, take a look at each of these passages and note what happened, who was involved, what is the general feel of the passage (victorious, defeating, hopeful...) and what God's role is in the events. Spend 15-20 minutes on this task.

2 Samuel 7:1-17

2 Samuel 12

1 Kings 1

2 Chronicles 29:25

Discuss briefly in the larger group who these men are and what significance they play in Old Testament history as reflected in these passages...

Now, as a group, read **2 Samuel 7**

Starting off - Observation questions:

Who is involved? Describe each person and integrate what you researched on them into what you see in this passage.

What is each person doing/saying? Discuss as a group any specifics of the passage that seem hard to understand.

What is God's role in all of this? Can you summarize what God is saying?

How are the different characters interacting? Who is communicating with whom?

Describe how this passage ends. What happens and what is the significance of this ending?

David spends a significant time praying to the Lord. What do you learn about God from David's statements? What do you learn about David's opinion of God?

Moving into meaning – Interpretation questions:

What do you learn about David's priorities? How would you describe his character? His personality?

What role does Nathan play? Why is he involved in this story at all?

What significance does Nathan have and hold in David's life?

What is significant about building a house for the LORD? Why is it significant in the relationship between David and Nathan?

What is God's response to these two men? How do you think God feels about them?

Describe how God, David and Nathan function as a community. Who takes on what role and why do you think this is that way? What does David do for Nathan? What does Nathan do for David? How does God play a role in these dynamics?

Application exercises – putting meaning into practice:

Choose 1 or 2 to focus on.

Group directed application: What has struck your group the most about this passage and the biographies of David and Nathan? Are there any obvious ways to incorporate what you have learned into your small group identity? If something is really striking your group, spend time praying about what you have discovered and really make concrete decisions on how to incorporate this into your small group's life.

Specific application challenges:

- 1) *Some would say that David plays the role of being a visionary in this passage. He observes a need to give the ark a home, and based upon his loving relationship with God, comes up with a striking plan. Nathan could be more described as a source of wisdom, consultation and empowerment for David due to his direct communication with God. Each of them has their own strengths that play vital roles in one of Israel's most glorious developments – God is getting a home!!!!*

Spend some time talking about the strengths each person has in your group. Share what you appreciate about each individual. Make these observations focused on godly character qualities, not shiny hair or a fun laugh. Discuss how these strengths have been used in community. For example, is one member especially gifted with wise biblical interpretation and another member gifted with joy and exuberance when studying the Bible? Talk about how these complement each other. Give examples! Discuss how the gifts of your group can help make the small group a home for God's presence.

- 2) *How does your group work together to achieve godly goals? In this passage, making a home for the ark was the goal, and the relationship between David, Nathan and God was the spark that made it come into fruition.*

What are some of your godly goals as a group? Have you defined any? Is it to serve more together? Is it to pray with each other more? Is it to challenge each other more on character issues? Set up one godly goal for your group right now. Talk about how the individuals in the community can help the whole. Who is really good at organizing? Who is really good at encouraging? Who is really good at making sure you stick to the goal? Look to the example of how David and Nathan helped each other to make this goal. Use it as a model!

Saturday Evening Study: A Low Point and a Challenge

Pre-study exercise: Take 5-10 minutes to recount what you learned about David and Nathan from this morning. How would you describe their personalities, character and relationship?

Read as a group **2 Samuel 11 and 12:1-25**.

Starting off – observation questions.

How does the passage start off? What is unusual about it? How does it foreshadow what is to come in the rest of the passage?

Describe the events of verses 11:1-5. Who is involved and what happens?

What happens next in verses 5-15? Compare and contrast the different characters.

How does chapter eleven finish? What happens? Who is involved?

Move on to chapter 12. In verses 1-4, what is Nathan doing? How is he doing it?

What is David's response? Describe what he says and his feelings.

What does Nathan say in verses 7-12? How does he say it? How did he know to say all these things?

What happens next?

Describe David's behavior in verses 16-23. How does he deal with God's punishment? What does he say about God?

Moving into meaning – interpretation questions.

Compare the David you see in this passage with the David you saw in this morning's passage. What happened? Specifically concentrate on how he made his decisions, with whom he made his decisions and what those decisions tell us about his character.

Discuss the relationship between Nathan and God... What do you learn about Nathan and how God views him?

Contrast the relationship you witnessed between David and Nathan in this morning's passage with the dynamic in chapter 12. How are things different? What has stayed the same?

How does God use the existing relationship between David and Nathan in this story? Why does God utilize Nathan in this way? Why not just deal directly with David?

What do we learn about how Nathan and David deal with God's forgiveness and punishment?

Application exercise – putting meaning into practice:

In this passage, David enters into a serious sin and Nathan boldly confronts him. Consider the following issues:

- 1) How does your group discuss sin? Do you talk about it as if it were some interesting, intellectual topic or do you openly talk about your own struggles with sin? Do you talk about it as a true character problem or is it easy for you to dismiss it as human error?
- 2) Have you ever had any confrontations about individual (someone lied) or group sin (the group gossips)? Why or why not? How did it go? If you did, did it resolve in forgiveness and correction? Why or why not?
- 3) What makes it hard to confront each others' sins? Is it a sense of hypocrisy? Do you just not want to know? Are you afraid of not knowing how to help or follow up? What are ways your small group can cultivate an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness that encourages honest responses such as David and Nathan's in chapter 12, verse 7?
- 4) In this passage, a few specific sins were addressed – lust, adultery, envy, murder, deception, hypocrisy and more. If necessary, break into smaller groups or pairs for this discussion... Try to spend some time talking about sexual sin, anger and lying. Is anyone struggling with these specifically? Take time to share this and reinforce how God does forgive and redeem (cf 1 John 1:5-9; 2_Corinthians 5: 17-21; 1 Peter 4:1-8)
- 5) Back in the group: Are other sins weighing on anyone's heart? Are you in an unhealthy relationship? Are you struggling with how to forgive? Are you not being generous with your money? Have a time of group confession. This is a time to develop a group identity where sin is honestly dealt with and is followed up by loving challenges to follow God instead of "the way of the wicked."
- 6) How can each of you cultivate a character similar to Nathan's? Nathan was bold, directed by God and immediately followed up his confrontation with the statement "The LORD has taken away your sin." How can your group form this identity together? Pray about this.

Sunday Morning Study: Loyalty and Integrity Follow Forgiveness

“The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness.”

-- William Blake

Pre-study exercise: Think about a person you once really trusted or a public figure that you saw fall from grace. Did you forgive? Did you want to immediately trust them again? Did you want to see their future provided for? Why or why not?

When someone falls from grace, what does it say about our character in how we respond to them? Are our responses dependent upon how they mend their ways? What does our response tell us about what we think about people who are mending their ways? Talk about this for 5-10 minutes.

As a group, read **1 Kings 1**.

Starting off – observation questions.

In the beginning of the passage, what kind of state was David in?

In verses 5-10, what do we learn is happening in the kingdom of Israel? What do we learn about Adonijah? Why doesn't he include Nathan in his plans?

What does Nathan do in verses 11-14? Does it seem like Nathan's view of David has changed from the last passage? If so, how?

What happens next? What do Bathsheba's and Nathan's words tell us about David?

In verses 29-35, how does David deal with the situation? What does he say and how does it reflect what he feels about God and his own word?

Have someone summarize how the situation progresses from here... how does it end?

What do Solomon's actions and words tell us about David's decision to make him the successor?

Moving into meaning – interpretation questions.

A lot of time has passed for Nathan and David. What is your sense about how they feel about each other? What seems to have happened between them? Recall what happened in the last study and compare and contrast the two chapters. What must have happened for these two men to be able to relate in this way?

Why does Nathan involve himself with the issue of who is to be David's successor? Why does he care so much about David's legacy and his family? What might this mean for Israel, too?

What does David's response to Nathan and Nathan's counsel tell you about how David views Nathan?

How does the passage reflect a sense of loyalty and trust—perhaps even contrasting the disloyalty of Adonijah? How is that loyalty demonstrated in the relationship between Nathan and David?

How does the passage reflect a sense of integrity? How is this integrity displayed between David and Nathan?

How does the character displayed by Nathan and David affect others in the community? Specifically, what might their relationship, their loyalty, their integrity show the new king?

Application exercises – putting meaning into practice:

We have now surveyed the relationship between Nathan and David. It began with a glorious high, sunk to an abysmal low and then ended with a sense of redemption. Pick one of the following application exercises and discuss it as a group.

- 1) *Nathan consistently showed a commitment to God's truth despite David's tumultuous spiritual walk. In the midst of the difficulties in their relationship, Nathan never left David's side.*

Think about a time you have been mentored by someone who has demonstrated consistent godly character. It could be a parent, a minister or a close friend – but it is definitely someone who led you toward God. What was it about them that made them stand by you? Share this in your group. How can you take their example and apply it in your group? What strengths do each of you have that can impact others in your group for the better? Be intentional and set up partnerships to help each other. Mentor each other!

- 2) *David's life demonstrates someone who has an amazing love for God but also unquestionably struggles with wanting to indulge his sinful nature. Thankfully, he ends his reign showing the ability to listen to others and respond with integrity.*

How has your life been similar or different? What has been your ultimate low? How did you deal with others who tried to correct you and lead you to repentance? Were you defensive? Did you see the need to change quickly? What personal factors do you think played a part in your response? How can

your group help each other respond well to correction and God's redemption? Come up with specific goals like having accountability partnerships or group confession and praise times.

- 3) *Look at the relationship between David and Nathan and trace God's hand in its course. How did God work through these two to make the other person better? How did God bless the larger community through the relationship of two men? See how both men have come to a point where their word is trustworthy and glorifies God.*

How can your group learn from each other and God's correction so that all of you can ultimately get to that same point? Make a mission and vision statement as a group in response to what you have learned about these two men. Define how you want to be in each others' lives and have regular check-ins with how you are doing with it.