

Oct 26/25 Leader's Guide

2 Samuel 12 – David: How to Repent

Read 2 Samuel 11:27a – 12:13a

1. What catches your attention in this story? What details or emotions stand out most to you?

Invite participants to slow down and name what strikes them — surprise, discomfort, conviction, or hope. This helps them enter the narrative personally before analyzing it.

2. Why do you think Nathan chose to tell a story rather than confront David directly? What might that reveal about the way God works to expose our hearts?

Nathan's parable bypasses David's defenses. God often works indirectly — through story, community, and the Spirit — to reach hardened hearts that would resist a direct rebuke.

3. Nathan's parable ends with David's outrage — 'This man deserves to die!' — before Nathan says, 'You are the man!' What does this moment reveal about how sin blinds us to ourselves?

Robert Altar speaks of the obverse side of a guilty conscience. If you are guilty in one area and you are tamping it down it can make you unusually uptight and upright with others in that same area.

We are often most indignant about sins we ourselves commit in secret. Like David, our consciences can be numbed in one area, yet overly harsh in another. Discuss how awareness grows when we recognize this dynamic.

4. Nathan lays the groundwork for repentance with three truths: see the source, take responsibility, and accept the consequences. Which of these stand out to you personally as important, and why?

See the truth (vs. 7-8): You took your eyes from the God who gave gave and began to take take take. When our sin is before us ask: what aspect of who God is and what he has done for me have I lost sight of that leads me to think, say, do this thing?

Take responsibility (vs. 9): You struck down Uriah, you took his wife, you killed him by the sword of the ammonites. Taking responsibility is the only way forward.

Accept the consequences (vs.10-12): The sword will never depart from your house, I will raise up evil against you, and violence will be done to your wives for all to see. This is not God actively punishing David, but God sovereignly allowing the natural consequences of his wrong to unfold. At least this is how the story plays out. The staged defeat that got Uriah killed emboldens the enemies of Israel and the sword did not depart from his house. He had used Joab as a tool to murder Uriah, and he could not from that point on reign in Joab's ruthlessness. His son Absalom leads an all out rebellion and David is forced to flee his palace. One of the main defectors is David's advisor Ahithophel who advises Absalom to take David's wives to the roof of the palace and do as he will with them for all to see. Horrific – but who was Ahithophel? None other than Bathsheba's grandfather who uses this moment to exact revenge on David for what he did to his granddaughter in the place it all began.

Encourage honest sharing of which one people find important to them.

Read Psalm 51:1-17

5. How does David's prayer in Psalm 51 show the difference between false and true repentance? (false repentance being remorse and resolution)

Remorse says, 'I can't believe I did that.' Resolution says – I'll do better next time. This arises from too high a view of ourselves so we are constantly being surprised at how angry, hateful, lustful we can become and we believe by an exertion of effort we can change ourselves.

Repentance says, 'I did that, and I need God's mercy.' Psalm 51 moves from self-focus to God-focus — from self-effort to dependence on grace.

6. In what ways do we try to cover our sin? How does David uncover his sin?

Naming and exposing sin breaks its power.

Blaming – they made me do, I only did that because of what they did to me.

Justifying – this was what I was trying to do

Denying – what me?

Renarrating – no no that's not the way it happened

Cover our sin with the sin of others – yes I did wrong but they were worse.

Repentance says I did that - I'm the kind of person who does that.

David uses four synonyms to speak of his wrong - I did that! And I am the kind of person who does that. I was conceived in sin in my mothers womb – meaning there is no part of me that isn't infected by sin, in me are all the raw materials for every wrong under the sun.

Encourage the group to reflect on how uncovering sin leads to healing and freedom.

7. Why does David say, 'Against you, you only, have I sinned'?
What does that teach us about the nature of repentance?

David recognizes that every sin is first a turning away from God.

If we begin with God our repentance will go right to the heart of our wrong and if we don't begin with God our repentance won't go deep enough.

Read John 19:1-5

8. What does it mean to 'fall on God's mercy alone'? How does comparing the two courtroom scenes (David and Pilate) Jesus' own help us understand the depth of God's mercy?

Here is the section from the sermon that unpacks this a bit:

In his commentary Eugene Peterson highlights the verbal resonance between this story of David standing before Nathan and Jesus standing before Pilate. Nathan says of David – you are the man. Pilate says of Jesus – behold the man.

Here we have two courtrooms, one David's the other Pilate's. In both courtrooms the roles should be reversed. David who is on the judgement seat should be in the dock. In Pilate's courtroom the man in the dock, the man accused and condemned, should be in the judgement seat.

In David's courtroom, God sends a prophet to rectify the situation. David now stands accused and is repenting.

In Pilates courtroom - no one shows up to put things right, and on the cross the judge of all the earth who did nothing wrong dies forsaken and condemned. But because Jesus was condemned we can be forgiven, because Jesus was judged we might receive mercy, because Jesus went down to death we might come to the fullness of life. A forgiveness, mercy, and new life laid hold of by way of repentance.

9. What might it look like this week for you to respond to God's loving, relentless call to repent and to find in repentance a peace that passes understanding and a verdict that 'You are beloved of God'?

Encourage discussing of practical steps that are in keeping with your discussion. End by affirming God's verdict — in Christ we are 'beloved of God,' and reveling in the truth that repentance restores joy and peace.