

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 1

MISSING PIECES
HOLINESS OF GOD
1 PETER 1:13-15; 2 SAMUEL 11:1-26, 12:1-15
03/12/2017



MAIN POINT

God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and absolutely morally pure.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Do you believe that there are moral absolutes? Can we definitively say that something is right or wrong? How do you imagine most people in our culture would answer these questions?

Ultimately, where does a sense of right and wrong come from? How do you know?

As the morals of our culture continue to plummet, there seems to be a loss of an ethical standard that has, at its foundation, the holiness of God. We are to be holy because He is holy. And because of the miraculous things that He has done, He is worthy of us to worship and follow. When we think about how holy and pure our God is, it shines a light on our own sin and need for His grace. From today's reading, we are reminded of the slippery slope of sin and the power and awe in God's holiness.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 11:1-13.

What three issues tempted David in verses 1-13? How could he have acted in the face of each temptation?

Why does God allow us to be tempted? What power do we have to resist temptation? Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 for insight.

David was tempted by three issues in this passage: 1) a beautiful woman, 2) the desire to keep their encounter secret, and 3) fear of retaliation from Uriah. We, like David, face many temptations, yet we always have the choice to give in to the temptation or resist it. The Bible doesn't go into detail about Bathsheba's role in the affair, but the word choice in the story indicates she was bathing for a ritual cleansing. Rather than flaunting her beauty, as is often assumed, she was actually preparing for worship.

What does that show about David's actions? Who was affected by David's sin, both directly and indirectly?

Describe David's first cover-up attempt (vv. 6-13). Why didn't it work? Who was affected by David's plot to make Uriah appear to be the father of Bathsheba's child?

David tried to cover his sin, making it worse. He hatched a plan to have Uriah come home from war, sleep with his wife, and think that he was the father of David's child (11:6-13). David's plan would have worked except for one thing—Uriah was so loyal to his job as a soldier in David's army that he would not sleep with his wife when he returned because it would have been unfair to the other soldiers in the field.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 11:14-27.

Describe David's second cover-up attempt (vv. 14-25). What were the results?

This time David wrote Uriah's death warrant, commanding Joab to put Uriah on the front line of battle. Uriah was killed, and David married Bathsheba (11:6-27). Temptation again hit him without his refusing it. He murdered one of his better soldiers to cover his own sin.

Read 2 Samuel 11:25-27 again. What does David's response to Uriah's death reveal about his spiritual state at that time?

How did God feel about what David had done? Why is our sin always ultimately against God?

Psalm 41:4, a psalm of David, encourages us to realize God's knowledge of our sin. Temptation can be deceptive, and even the most committed Christians are vulnerable to the progression of sin as they yield to temptation. But God is proactive in convicting us of our sin and bringing us back to Himself. This process often involves the intervention of a fellow brother or sister in Christ, which was the task God gave the prophet Nathan in David's situation.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 12:1-15.

How would you have felt in Nathan's position, bearing the responsibility of confronting the king? Have you ever had a similar responsibility in someone's life?

How do you think David felt when he suddenly was accused of sin by Nathan (vv. 7-12)? How do you feel when you realize God is accusing you of sin?

The parable was intended to evoke David's reaction and move him toward confession and forgiveness. According to verses 5-6 and 13, it worked. David confessed his sin to God and was moved to repentance after Nathan brought him face to face with his sins and their consequences.

According to verses 10-14, what would be the consequences for David's sins? Did David's repentance have any affect on his sin's consequences?

How is God's holiness on display in this story from David's life?

God's leader had committed a very public sin, a fact that contributed to God's verdict: the son born to you will die, the first of many disasters the royal family would face. God wouldn't allow this child—a reminder of David's adultery and murder—to live. We too need to confess our sins to the Lord. By doing so we become more sensitive to the ways we rebel against Him and hurt others and ourselves. We also experience in a far greater way His mercy and cleansing power.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 1:13-15.

How have you changed since coming to know Christ as Lord? How has your thinking changed? your attitude? your goals? your desires?

How might remembering that Christ will one day return encourage us in our pursuit of holiness?

As Christians, we are living in a unique time in between Christ's first coming and His final return. As a result, we have been "born again to a living hope" and sealed for an "inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:3-4). Yet we still have sinful passions that distract us from Christ (v. 14). In light of this, Peter not only reminds us of the salvation that is ours in Christ, but also he challenges us to actively pursue holiness. The word "holy" literally means "set apart," and it is most often used to refer to God's perfect character. In light of God's glorious character, Christians are to live out their eternal hope by daily choosing God—and by doing so, they are daily choosing holiness.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How are you pursuing your personal holiness? What is your motivation to pursue this?

One question to diagnose your spiritual health is: "Do I long for God?" How would you answer this? Do you know what it looks and feels like to long for God, just as David did? If not, what needs to change?

How does our holiness put us in a position where God can use us, whenever and however He chooses?

PRAY

Praise God for His holiness and glory. Thank Him for making you holy through the blood of Jesus Christ. Ask Him to continue to sanctify you and help you long for and desire Him in your life.

COMMENTARY

2 SAMUEL 11-12

11:1. David earlier had defeated the Ammonites (2 Sam. 10:6-14), but had not eliminated the threat they posed. Under Joab, David sent the king's men (and the whole Israelite army) to crush the Ammonites. The Israelites quickly defeated the Ammonites in battle and besieged Rabbah, their capital city. Some Bible students suggest David no longer wished to go into battle, preferring the luxurious life of the royal court. More likely, Joab and his troops insisted David remain in Jerusalem.

11:2-3. The roof of the palace was probably on the highest ground, providing the king a commanding view of Jerusalem. He saw a woman bathing ("washing"); the text does not suggest she did so intentionally to lure David into an encounter. David discovered the woman's identity—she was Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam (one of David's elite warriors; 23:34) and the wife of Uriah the Hittite (another of David's elite soldiers; 23:39). At any rate, her married status rendered her off-limits to the king.

11:4. David . . . slept with her—meaning he had intercourse with her. The narrative is silent about Bathsheba's feelings about coming to the palace and submitting to the king's wishes. Apparently the intent of the biblical writer was to place ultimate blame where it belonged—with Israel's king.

11:5-8. The news of Bathsheba's pregnancy presented special problems for the king because her husband Uriah had

been away fighting the Ammonites and thus could not be the father of the child. David sent orders to Joab without revealing the reason he was summoning Uriah. The words of the king to Uriah, wash your feet, suggested a time of gentle relaxing at Uriah's house, where Bathsheba might arrange an evening with her husband to make it appear that he was the baby's father.

11:14. When David's plan failed, he devised a new strategy. Uriah's actions made a cover-up impossible, so the king decided to eliminate Uriah. David wrote a letter to Joab to send with Uriah. Uriah probably assumed the letter bore instructions about the siege. A loyal soldier of his general and king, he did not break the seal of the letter to read it. Uriah's obedience to his king contrasted sharply with David's disobedience to the King of kings.

11:15-16. David's initial sin drew him into a series of more desperate actions. He devised a plan to make Uriah's death look like a terrible tragedy of war. David's letter instructed Joab to place Uriah in the front line where the fighting would be fiercest and then withdraw from him so he would be struck down and die. Joab had to attack the strongly fortified city and ensure Uriah's death while seeking to minimize his losses. Uriah never knew or suspected he carried his own death sentence. Uriah became a casualty of war.

11:26. The text's description of Bathsheba only as Uriah's wife is probably intentional to accent David's sin. She mourned for Uriah, probably putting on mourner's clothes (Jer 6:26), throwing dirt or ashes on her head (2 Sam 1:2), sitting in the dirt (Isa 47:1), fasting (1 Sam 31:13), and weeping.

11:27. The time of mourning is not given. Israel mourned Moses for 30 days (Dt 34:8), but Uriah's mourning probably was not that long. David then brought Bathsheba to his house, and soon she bore him a son.

12:1. Nathan did not act on his own initiative, but in obedience to the Lord's command. Nathan began by telling a parable about a rich man who stole a poor man's lone pet lamb and cooked the lamb for a meal.

12:2. Like an attorney, Nathan laid out his case to the king. The villain of the parable was introduced simply as a rich man. The man's wealth did not make the man evil. Rather his affluence provided the evidence that revealed his action to be in the wrong. The rich man possessed an ample supply from which he could have selected an animal to slaughter for the meal.

12:3. In stark contrast to the abundance of the villain, the victim was poor and had only one lamb. This animal was not intended to become food because it was the family pet. The man fed the lamb from his own food. His children played with it. Indeed, it was treated like a daughter.

12:4 Nathan brought his parable to dramatic climax by contrasting two possible choices that the rich man could have made. A traveler visited him. The rich man's responsibility would have been the same regardless of the traveler's social or political status. As the traveler's host, the rich man was expected to provide his guest with a bountiful meal. He refused to sacrifice any of his animals and so he stole and slaughtered the poor man's pet.

12:5 David's first reaction to Nathan's parable was personal. The harm the rich man did to the poor man and his family aroused David's sympathy and ire. His rage over the rich man's wicked actions exploded in absolute condemnation.

12:6. David's second reaction was official. As king he issued judgments in accordance with Mosaic law. Exodus 22:1 gives clear sentencing guidelines for such a case as this. It specified four sheep be given to the poor man in compensation for his loss. Stealing was not a capital offense. Instead of the death penalty, the law required restitution. Thus David's death decree was more emotional than biblical. In fact, since the punishment did not fit the crime, it did not equate to justice.

12:7. In neither reaction did David give evidence of understanding the parable's purpose, so Nathan boldly personalized it for him. With his powerful words, You are the man, the prophet drove home the application of the parable. The parable laid a foundation for what was to come; the words this is what the Lord God of Israel says then introduced God's indictment against the wayward king. The Lord then began to describe all He had done for David, beginning with giving him the kingship and delivering him from the hand of Saul.

12:8-12. The phrase I would have given you even more demonstrated the Lord's willingness to go even further with David's blessing if the king had only asked. David had not merely neglected the command of the Lord; he had despised it with his grievous actions. David's own family would be the instruments of God's judgment. The words I will take your wives and give them to another were fulfilled by David's son Absalom when Absalom tried to usurp the kingship (16:20-22). David's sinful actions perverted his relationship with God, ravaged the lives of two loyal subjects—one a devoted soldier—and consigned David's family to future devastation.

12:13. David's response—I have sinned—contrasts sharply with that of Saul when Samuel confronted him over his sin (1 Sam 15:15,20-21). Saul gave excuse after excuse, but David's heart (1 Sam 13:14) would not let him do so. Nathan assured the king that his life would be spared.

12:14. The language of this verse is difficult and has been rendered different ways. The words you treated the Lord with ... contempt emphasize David's careless treatment of God's commands (v. 9). Other manuscripts read, "You have caused

the Lord's enemies to blaspheme," meaning the enemies of God treated Him with disdain because they had seen the hypocrisy of His chosen leader. In either case, God's leader had committed a very public sin, a fact that contributed to God's verdict: the son born to you will die. God would not allow this child—a reminder of David's adultery and murder—to live.

1 PETER 1:13-15

1:13. The grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the culmination of God's redemptive activity in Jesus that will occur at His return (v. 5).

1:14. The phrase former ignorance means "without knowledge of God" and suggests that the recipients of this letter were mostly Gentiles who, before coming to Christ, practiced pagan religions.

1:15-16. God is the Christian's standard for holy living (Lv 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).