

“Uriah, A Faithful Soldier”
II Samuel 11.1-17

I’ve always admired the character of Uriah.
So as part of our summer Bible Character series
I picked Uriah, the perfect patriot to talk about in this independence week.

I was surprised to find out there aren’t too many words written about Uriah.
We find his story in the shadow of David’s story.
David is the great Biblical giant,
yet in the story today, Uriah proves to be the spiritual giant.

Uriah, unlike David, models integrity and self-discipline,
and definitely, a great devotion to duty.

Let’s sort through David’s stuff first.
David, the simple shepherd boy who became the super shepherd king
had no delusion about how and why
he had had great success, II Samuel 5.12,
*And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel
and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.*

But we know he forgot.
You see despite God’s provision and protection,
and David’s character and great charisma,
there is a chink in this great soldier’s armor,
a crack in his character...that guess what?
The crack is going to get bigger.

Verse 13, *After he left Hebron,
David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem,
and more sons and daughters were born to him.*

You and I know David shouldn’t have taken more wives.
David should have known that,
Deuteronomy 17.17 tells us that the king,
“neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away;

Now don’t miss that, *“less his heart is turned away.”*
Anytime any of us become less obedient,
we become more distracted and less focus on the things of God.

David’s passion for life, his love of life takes a turn,
a twist away from God and onto the path of lust.

David’s desire for sex becomes insatiable, unsatisfied, and uncontrolled.

Chapters 5 through 11 tell us that David continues to win victories in battle,
that he gains more and more prestige,
and that he has taken Israel to the height of her glory.

But, in II Samuel 11.1, at the palace, the soap opera begins.

There is a change not only in climate but a change in David's character,
*In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war,
 David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army.
 They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah.
 But David remained in Jerusalem.*

You see in Spring, the roads dry up and it's time to go to war.
 But David is going to sit this one out.

Maybe David's tired of sleeping on the ground,
 eating army grub, or exercising his brain for battle.

Or maybe he's just in mid-life crisis.
 That is a time in a man's life when work ceases to be fulfilling,
 the family is restricting, the body limiting, and God seems absent.

But whether it's weariness, laziness, or boredom,
 the excuse doesn't matter,
 David wasn't where he belonged.
 He was in bedroom and not on the battlefield.

His unchannel passion and lack of purpose spells trouble.
 Hey, for you and I in that state of mind, without direction and purpose,
 we would be headed for trouble as well.

Back at the palace, verse 2,
*One evening David got up from his bed
 (he was taking an afternoon nap)
 and walked around on the roof of the palace.
 From the roof he saw a woman bathing.
 The woman was very beautiful,
 and David sent someone to find out about her.*

I think David's found something he wants to do.
 The servant shows up...
*The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba,
 the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"*

Did you catch that?
 The servant knows, he tries to warn David.
 While he is talking to David we can hear him inwardly shouting,
 "It's Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam ,
 AND THE WIFE, THE WIFE, THE WIFE of Uriah. GET IT DAVID!!!"

David doesn't get it or gets it but chooses to ignore it.
 He should have been reading his Bible.
 You know, taken a peek in the ark of the covenant,
 picked up the stone tables with the ten commandments,

run his finger down the stone,
to the seventh line...oh, there it is
"Thou shall not commit adultery."

But David doesn't do that, he is blinded by his lust, so
*⁴ Then David sent messengers to get her.
She came to him, and he slept with her.*

David is not thinking with his kingly head or godly heart.

Haven't you heard people say, "Ohhh, it just feels right?"
when they 're trying to rationalize immoral or improper behavior.

Friends, we can't let our feelings drive the train.
The Bible tells us the heart deceives.

There is faith, facts, and feelings.
Faith should be the engine, facts in the cars behind, and feeling in the caboose.

Back at the palace, *(She had purified herself from her uncleanness.)
Then ^[a] she went back home.*

Ok, so you want to ask another question.
What responsibility does Bathsheba have in these circumstances?
Good question. I'm sooo glad you asked.

We wonder if Bathsheba was innocently bathing
or shamelessly baiting her powerful and prestigious neighbor.
We wonder if she was powerless and forced to comply
or if she was willing to comply with King David's wishes.

We really don't know.
Perhaps Bathsheba could have been a bit more modest,
used a bit more discretion, and not bathed where she could be seen.

We do know that David was the aggressor and that David was wrong.
But playing the blame game doesn't necessarily help us.
We all have our own issues, our own temptations, our own sins to deal with.

We do know sex is powerful motivator.
Couple that with the fact that many people are starved for love and affection
and sine there is usually a plethora of opportunities...

We need to be careful with our actions and words, don't we?
We need to act appropriately so as not to create an inappropriate response,
We need to speak respectfully so as not encourage another's interest.
And we need to dress modestly so as not arouse another's desire.

Most importantly we need to continue to keep our focus on God.

If you are tempted to have an affair-
take the time to check it out in the book.
That will slow you down a bit.

Many Bible passages tell you that it is wrong.
The first time it is etched in stone is Exodus 20.14, "You shall not commit adultery."

And then when confronted with temptation,
for God's sake, for your sake, and for the sake of others-
do resist; turn away, step away, and run away.

Back at the palace,

⁵ *The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."*

The values of our culture are constantly being shaped and reinforced
by what we see on TV and hear in the news.

We're encouraged to sell our souls to the fun and feel good gods.
We forget for the moment some of the unwanted consequences
of serving these fun and feel good gods.

We forget that there can be unwanted pregnancies,
unwanted diseases, and we create unwanted hurt and broken trust in relationships.

Back at the palace.

David hears the news and tries to put into place Plan A,
the first of three plans to do damage control
and avoid the eminent scandal, verse 6,
*So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite."
And Joab sent him to David.*

⁷ *When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was,
how the soldiers were and how the war was going.*

Don't you love David's casual "coffee time" chat with Uriah
about what they know and who they have in common?

⁸ *Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet."
(Meaning-go home and enjoy your wife)
So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him.
(The gift was probably some food)*

David provided this unscheduled furlough for Uriah
and David, being the "red blooded Jewish boy that he is,
assumes that Uriah will go home and sleep with his wife.
So, without DNA testing available,

the paternity of the newborn would not be questioned,
and the potential scandal of the King squelched.

Uriah amazingly enough, has other ideas.

⁹ *But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants
and did not go down to his house.*

Our contemporary ears can hardly believe what we just heard
and neither can David's,

¹⁰ *When David was told, "Uriah did not go home," he asked him,
"Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?"*

¹¹ *Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,
and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields.
How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife?
As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"*

Wow!!! Uriah expresses his allegiance to God, country, his commander, and cohorts.

Let's break it down.

The ark is a manifestation of God's presence. (God)
Israel and Judah are flying under the same flag. (Country)
Master Joab is his commander
and my lord's men are his fellow soldiers or cohorts.

Evidently in Uriah's mind to go home to his wife
under these circumstances would be tantamount
to treason, dereliction of duty, and dishonorable to the king.

What an incredible paradox.

Uriah wants to honor the king who has definitely dishonored him.

Uriah wants to maintain his integrity as a soldier,
thus his commitment to God, county, and fellow soldiers
while David does remains committed on himself.

David's plans and priorities are all about his comfort and his convenience,
his wants and his desires, his pleasure and his reputation.

We are often confronted by those choices
between the well being of others and ourselves-aren't we?

Well, back at the palace,
David's still trying to avoid a big scandal, PLAN B.

What better way to help Uriah loosen up,
lose his inhibitions, lose his integrity,
and get him to go home and spend a little time with the wife

THAN TO GET HIM DRUNK!!!

¹² *Then David said to him,
"Stay here one more day and tomorrow I will send you back."
So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.*

¹³ *At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him,
and David made him drunk.*

My guess is that Uriah only sat down at the king's table because to refuse to sit at the king's table for a day could result in sitting in the king's dungeon with no table and for more than a few days.

Anyway PLAN B doesn't work either.

Uriah goes along with the first part of the plan,

*But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants;
he did not go home.*

Well, even drunk Uriah shows more discipline than the sober king.

Back at the palace.

While Uriah has taken the high road,
David continues to take the low road.

David is even more desperate.

He has actually lost it.

To save his reputation at all costs,
and for whatever he thinks he's saving his reputation for,
David devises Plan C.

¹⁴ *In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.*

¹⁵ *In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest.
Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."*

If this fails Uriah will be killed by "friendly fire" from an unfriendly "friend."

¹⁶ *So while Joab had the city under siege,
he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. ¹⁷
When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab,
some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.*

David gets his wish but chalks up another wrong

He should have consulted the book on this one too.

It's the sixth line down, Exodus 20.13, "*You shall not murder.*"

Back to the palace,

²⁷ *After the time of mourning was over,
David had her brought to his house,
and she became his wife and bore him a son.
But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*

Don't miss this because David doesn't get off the hook,
"the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

We know David eventually realized the error of his ways,
presented God with "a broken and contrite heart,"
sought forgiveness, accepted the consequences,
and then continued his rule with success.

In I Kings 15.5,

*"For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord
And had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands
All the days of his life-except in the case of Uriah the Hittite."*

*And because Uriah is a faithful soldier devoted to duty,
self-disciplined and a man of integrity you'd expect
his name to be listed someplace on a wall or a plaque in his memor.*

Well, it is, Matthew 1.6,

"David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife."

I think God chose to honor this faithful soldier by giving him a line
in the genealogy of Jesus even though,
Uriah is not actually in the bloodline of Jesus.

And today, Uriah's life should give us something to remember,
something to think about, something to appreciate, and something to live up to.

We celebrate the freedoms we have in this country today
because of soldiers like Uriah and their devotion to duty.

And we celebrate as well freedom,
the great freedom we have from sin and death,
because of our Savior Jesus and his devotion to duty.

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