



November 10, 2013

The Wildernesses of Our Own Making



A Grow-Pray-Study guide for small groups

This guide uses the Scripture readings from the daily "GPS" study guide. Group members may read the daily readings before the group meeting, or read the verses aloud when the group meets.

The group may subdivide into two or three smaller groups, each discussing a set of the daily readings and the matching questions on page 2, or the entire group may discuss those questions together. We pray that, whatever pattern of study you choose, the Holy Spirit will weave God's Word into the life and heart of each group member.

MONDAY

2 Samuel 11:1-27

David didn't choose his first wilderness time (cf. 1 Samuel 23:14-24). King Saul's paranoia forced that on him. But by the time of this story, David was king of all Israel, respected and loved. Dazzled by Bathsheba's beauty, he seized her for his own pleasure, though she was married to one of his loyal soldiers. To cover his role in her pregnancy, he first tried to manipulate, and then killed, her husband Uriah. He wounded his reign, and badly damaged his moral character and leadership.

TUESDAY

2 Samuel 12:1-14

As we read yesterday, King David masterminded a terrible series of events. He committed adultery with a friend's wife, and got her pregnant. Then he tried to cover up his affair, and ordered Uriah placed at the front of a battle line, guaranteeing his death. David had to face up to the wrong he had done. God used one of David's closest friends and advisers, Nathan the prophet, to hold him accountable.

WEDNESDAY

Psalms 51:1-10, 32:1-5

David turned away from his reckless, destructive course after Nathan's challenge. Psalm 51 reflects the profound spiritual dynamic involved in setting aside excuses, and taking ownership of his errors in order to accept God's forgiveness and renewed peace. Psalm 32 addressed the inner emptiness that came from concealing what he had done, and the freedom and release that came with letting go of the cover-up mindset.

THURSDAY

2 Samuel 15:1-16, 16:15-17:14

David's repentance and God's forgiveness did not wipe out all the consequences of David's wrong actions with Bathsheba. David's self-inflicted wound cost him many people's respect. Absalom, one of his sons, led a major revolt, exploiting that lesser public regard for David. (Putting 2 Samuel 23:34 with 2 Samuel 11:3, many scholars think Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. That would explain why David's advisor helped the rebels.) His initial success drove David from his beloved capital, Jerusalem, and into a new wilderness journey.

FRIDAY

2 Samuel 18:1-18, 18:31-19:8

David organized his loyal soldiers to resist Absalom's rebellion. He did plead with them not to hurt his son. His veteran fighters beat Absalom's army, and Joab brutally ignored David's wish. David's self-inflicted weakness in the end brought him the shattering grief of losing Absalom, the son he loved despite his disloyalty.

SATURDAY

1 Chronicles 28:1-10, 29:1-9, 2 Samuel 23:1-5

David's bad choices put him (and Israel) through great "wilderness" pain, even to a brief civil war. But because he made peace with God and continued to bear his kingly responsibilities, they didn't end his service to God and his people. In his final years, he collected supplies for the Temple his son Solomon would build. According to 2 Samuel 23, his final words praised God for guiding him in his duties as king.

To access the Family Activity suggested in this week's GPS, download the printable GPS from www.cor.org/guide.



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SUGGESTED PRAYER

Lord God, when we stumble, help us to rise again. Build in us the character and wisdom to help us fall less often. Grant that we might be people of action based upon your will and your strength, not ours. Help us to choose wisely. Give us hearts of love for you. Give us honor, courage and ears to hear when you correct us through others who speak for you. Amen.

CONNECT (5-10 minute discussion, at most)

Do you do anything in the fall to prepare for winter? Any tips? Do you do anything special to your home or your car?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND STUDY

- Read **2 Samuel 11:1-27**. Do you believe that most of our troubles in life stem more from “life happening,” or are the result of our own misdeeds? In what way did David’s first misdeed cascade even further? How have you made a mistake in life that you tried to fix, and that fix just made your misdeed even worse? What would have been required, for David or for you, to stop this sequence of ever more serious misdeeds? Do you think Bathsheba may have contributed to these problems? If so, who was most at fault for David’s troubles? Who is responsible for the choices we make?
- Read **2 Samuel 12:1-14**. What did David have to do in order to receive God’s forgiveness? For what did God forgive David? What does God’s forgiveness of David tell you about God? What does the expression “confession is good for the soul” mean to you? Catholics believe they should confess to a priest. As Protestants, who should we confess to? Would most kings have felt guilty for whatever they chose to do? What does it sometimes take for us to feel accountable for our wrongdoing? Nathan was David’s “mirror.” Who can be your mirror?
- Read **Psalms 51:1-10, 32:1-5**. Did David take full ownership for his errors? Why did you answer as you did? Did he let go of his tendency to cover up? Are you able to talk to God in the same kind of whole-hearted, forthright and trusting way? Have you ever gone to God to seek forgiveness and felt complete relief and freedom? Freedom from what?
- Read **2 Samuel 15:1-16, 16:15-17:14**. If God forgives us for our sins, does that mean that the consequences of our actions are also eliminated? Are there ways we might be able to counteract some of the consequences? Why was Absalom so successful in turning the heads of the people? While this was going on, do you think David had faith that God would see to it that “things would all work out”? Do you always feel that way? Either way, are you able to draw strength and courage from your relationship with God? What helps you to feel this strength?
- Read **2 Samuel 18:1-18, 18:31-19:8**. David did not allow his shame and guilt to paralyze him. What can we learn from that for our own lives? When we feel guilt, should we curl up in the corner, or push on in life? Does our faith help us in times like this? Absalom proved to be a poor leader, so how did he fool so many people? How can God’s principles help us make wise choices in which leaders we follow?
- Read **1 Chronicles 28:1-10, 29:1-9, 2 Samuel 23:1-5**. Why wasn’t David allowed to build the temple? How do we know God still loved David? Why did God continue to love David? What is the message here for all of us? What choices can you make every day that will help you live with the same kind of spiritual trust and psychological resilience that David showed?

From last week: Did you, if you were experiencing grief and loss, review the suggestions offered and apply them to yourself? If you were not, and you knew others who were experiencing difficulties, were you able to offer any support to help them deal with



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their situation? Did you pray daily for God's insight, wisdom and strength for those times when you will face loss and those times when you might be able to help others? Please share your experiences with the group.

FOR ADDITIONAL INSIGHT

From Pastor Adam Hamilton's sermon, November 10, 2013:

David was a central figure in Israel's faith. He lived around 1,000 years before the birth of Christ and is Israel's archetypal king. To this day the Star of David marks Israel's flag. He was a valiant warrior, a poet and songwriter. His name is second only to Jesus for the most mentions in the Bible—nearly 1,000 times he's mentioned in scripture (968 to be exact versus 1,090 for Jesus). David has 64 chapters devoted to telling his story in the Old Testament. He is also associated with the writing of 75 Psalms. Combining these two he is the towering figure of the Old Testament. God says of David, "He is a man after my own heart."

The book of 2 Samuel was composed by the same author or group of authors who wrote 1 Samuel, 1 Kings and 2 Kings. These books were written sometime after 587 B.C., more than 400 years after the death of David. The stories about David circulated as short stories and anecdotes told around the campfire, or in the home, to entertain, but also to teach about life and faith and God. When they were finally written down they were masterpieces of ancient near eastern literature. Today we'll turn to one of the most famous episodes of King David's life. If you have your Bible, turn to 2 Samuel 11....

We've all made bad decisions in our lives. We've succumbed to temptation, maybe even chased after it. We've walked away from the path God had laid out for us. Isaiah 53:6 notes: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way." Paul notes in Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I John 1:8 says it this way: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Yes, we all stray from God's path at times. We know the right way, but we feel the lure of the forbidden fruit. It's interesting that "sin" has become a word that seems judgmental and overly harsh. No one wants to be called a sinner. I've met people who protest this idea of sin, and want very much to assert that we don't have a problem with sin. But just watch the evening news. This week I watched the press conference with the Mayor of Toronto who admitted that he had smoked crack cocaine while in office. You may not have smoked crack, but you have known the war that goes on inside of each of us between the impulse to do what is good and right and loving, and the impulse to do what is evil, and unkind and just plain wrong.

You're not a terrible person if you feel drawn to sin. You're human. But at some point you make a decision: "This is not healthy for me, it makes me a slave or it hurts other people."...

Often our attempts to fix the problem in our lives results in our wading deeper into sin. David violated the 10th Commandment forbidding coveting your neighbor's mate. Then he violated the 7th Commandment, forbidding adultery. He violated the 8th commandment forbidding stealing what was not yours. One might say he violated the 1st commandment by placing sexual gratification above God. Then he violated the 6th Commandment, forbidding murder. This was the man who had composed at least 75 of the Psalms in our Bible, who was Israel's ideal king, who was said to be a "friend of God." Which tells me that even those who love God, who seek to live as men and women after God's own heart, can make terrible decisions....

Was there any hope for David after the mess he made? Yes, there was hope. David turned to God and repented before the Lord. He recognized the sin he'd committed, the gravity of it. His prayer of confession and repentance is preserved for us in Psalm 51....God forgave even David's sins. His last years were blessed. Listen to how David's life is summarized in I Chronicles 29: "The period that [David] reigned over Israel was forty years...He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor." He knew his share of challenges. There were consequences and reverberations of his previous actions. But God walked with him, saved him from his enemies, and blessed him.

Here's the point I want you to see from the wilderness that David created for himself as a result of his sin and poor decisions: God is the God of the second chance, and with him, no matter how hopeless you may be in the wildernesses you yourself have created, he will take you back, give you life, if you'll just trust in him.

We are all sinners in need of saving. We have a Savior who longs to deliver us, if we'll only let him. That deliverance will include our trusting in him, not only in the intellect, but also in the heart, and then finally to choose a path of obedience to him, and to lay aside the path that leads to death. God is the God of the second chance. David was one of the Bible's greatest examples of this.



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Bathsheba

According to the Hebrew Bible, Bathsheba (Hebrew: Bat Sheva, "daughter of the oath") was the wife of Uriah the Hittite and later of David, king of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. She is most known for the Bible story in which King David took her to sleep with him.

Bathsheba was a daughter of Eliam, one of David's "thirty" (2 Sam. 23:34; cf 1 Chr. 3:5); Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, one of David's chief advisors. Ahithophel was from Giloh (Josh. 15:51; cf. 2 Sam. 15:12), a city of Judah, and thus Bathsheba was from David's own tribe and the granddaughter of one of David's closest advisors (2 Sam. 15:12)." She was the mother of Solomon, who succeeded David as king, making her the Queen Mother.

In David's old age, Bathsheba secured the succession to the throne of her son Solomon, instead of David's eldest surviving son Adonijah. (1 Kings 1:11-31).

The story of David's adultery sets up the context for the penitential Psalm 51, also known as "Miserere" ("Have mercy on me, O God").

In the Gospel of Matthew 1:6 she is indirectly mentioned as an ancestor of Jesus.

Bathsheba at her Bath is the formal name for the subject in art showing Bathsheba bathing, watched by King David. As an opportunity to feature a large female nude as the focus of a history painting, the subject was popular from the Renaissance onwards. Sometimes Bathsheba's maids, or the "messengers" sent by David are shown, and often a distant David watching from his roof. The messengers are sometimes confused with David himself, but most artists follow the Bible in keeping David at a distance in this episode.

Considering that David's Jerusalem was tightly packed and that Bathsheba's house may have been as close as twenty feet away from David's rooftop, and that people in ancient times were exceptionally modest about showing their bodies, some have suggested that Bathsheba displayed herself deliberately, so that instead of being an innocent victim, it was actually she who seduced David in order to rid herself of Uriah, and move in with the king.

The faulting of David is made clear in the text from the very beginning. "It was springtime, the time when kings go forth to war... but David remained in Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 11:1). If David had been acting as a good king and had been at war, the incident would not have taken place. After the incident, of course, there is Nathan's rebuke in 2 Samuel 12 and the curse and events that follow. The Bathsheba incident, then, begins a shift in the book's perspective. David "is largely at the mercy of events rather than directing them." He is no longer able to control his family and ends up being challenged by Absalom. In 2 Samuel 13 there is another way the text blames David - in the story of David's son Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar. The placement of the rape so soon after the incident of Bathsheba seems to draw a parallel between sexual misconduct of father and son.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bathsheba>

Final application:

This week, it's about making choices, so pray daily that you might make the right choices in your daily life. It's amazing how many choices we make each day without really thinking about them. So this week, make your choices more consciously and deliberately. Ask God to guide you and give you the strength to make the right and wisest choices. Next week, let the group know whether you felt any change in your usual decision making.