

# **God's Story – Our Story**

**Characters and Character – Saul, Dave and Matters of the Heart**

**April 14, 2024**

**Overarching Theme:** 2024 – A Year in God's Story

## **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

**Core Point:** 2024 can be a year of living into God's Story as we journey from Genesis to Revelation together.

**Reflect on this Scripture:** **2 Samuel 12:1-10** <sup>1</sup> and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare and drink from his cup and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; <sup>6</sup> he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah, and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

## **Commentary:**

David, his life, his career, and so on and so forth are often popularly glossed by preachers and believers alike as being somehow "after God's own heart."

It's important to remember that, in Samuel, that phrase occurs very early on, in connection with the rejection of Saul's kingship (1 Samuel 13:14). David has not yet been introduced in the narrative, is not mentioned by name there, and is not yet anointed king — all of which doesn't happen until 1 Samuel 16. Much happens after 1 Samuel 13:14, that is — including 2 Samuel 11 — which should give us pause whenever we are tempted to tritely say that David was a king "after God's own heart." Not always! Sometimes, instead, David was a king who "despised the LORD's word" and who did what was evil in God's eyes (2 Samuel 12:9). That is why he must suffer the judgment of God in so many shocking and horrific ways (2 Samuel 12:10-13). And yet David doesn't dissemble. He hears Nathan's parable, hears the conclusion, "You are that man!" and replies with a stunningly quick and brief confession: "I've sinned against the LORD".

It almost seems *too* quick, *too* brief, which may be what led to the long association of Psalm 51 with this exchange with Nathan. We'd like to hear David say more, be more contrite, than just two words. We'd like to hear him beg for mercy and forgiveness (Psalm 51:1-2, 7-13). Of course all of that and more is what Psalm 51 delivers. And yet, even in 2 Samuel 12, even with only two words at hand, David doesn't dissemble, he *confesses*. Immediately, quickly, without excuse — in front of Nathan and God and all others who witnessed this dialogue. There he is: Great king David, a man after God's own heart, *an adulterous, murderous sinner*. And yet, there he is: adulterous, murderous, sinful David, *confessing*. Perhaps he is a man after God's own heart after all because he is somehow able to hear God's judgment and immediately accept it and the results that follow upon it.

-Adapted from online commentary by Brent Strawn

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Early in 1 Samuel we read that the word of the Lord was rare in those days (3:1). Do you think that the word of the Lord was rare, or that people who listened for a word of the Lord were rare?
2. Why do you think the people were insistent about having a King, to be like the other nations? Why do you think Samuel was so resistant to their request?
3. For all his initial promise, King Saul's heart became increasingly dark. What do you think led to his downfall?

4. King David is described as a man after God's heart. How can a man with this kind of heart come to a point where he "*despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight?*"
5. Ultimately, King David did repent of his great sin, although his actions caused enduring damage to all involved. What can we learn from this cautionary tale?

**Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: *Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right<sup>[b]</sup> spirit within me.*