

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all good, joyous and wonderful things happen, please touch my life today. Within the mundane routine of my daily life, show me Your extraordinary power to transform all things for the better; heal me, save me, enthuse me and lead me forward according to the majesty and grace of Your glorious will. I pray this through Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour; AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Rural life

We will offer prayers this week for the countryside and the rural communities living there. Pray for communities in your country that have problems because of being remote.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for people who are struggling to maintain a living*
- *Pray for the efforts made in your country to help the economy*
- *Give thanks for the music you listen to and enjoy*

Meditation

Lord Jesus, move my soul to worship You this day;

Worship which is vibrant in the things of God, and is

Honouring to Almighty God, however I may wish to do it;
Healing for the spirit, because You are present in power;
Glorious in every way, to see and to feel and to share;
Sensitive to the deepest needs of all who seek Your love;
Fulfilling, because the word of God is taught and learned;
Forgiving, for Your love is shared in fullest measure;
Prophetic, and therefore speaking Your faithful word to all;
Challenging, because it moves the heart and soul and mind;

May I be enabled to make my own contribution

To the worship of all God's people this day, and be fulfilled.

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 11:6-13

⁶ David therefore sent a message to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came, David asked him about Joab and the army, and how the war was going. ⁸ Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah left the king's house, and a gift from the King was sent after him.

⁹ But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with the other servants of his lord, and did not go to his house. ¹⁰ When they told David, 'Uriah did not go home,' David said to Uriah, 'You have just come from a journey. Why didn't you go home?' ¹¹ Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are still in tents; and my lord Joab and your servants are camping in open fields. How can I go to my home, to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do this.' ¹² Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today as well,

and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, ¹³ David invited him to eat and drink with him and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with his master's servants, but he did not go home.

Review

After David's appalling seduction of Bathsheba and subsequent adultery, the story of his life changed, and the verses of scripture we read yesterday (2 Sam 11:1-5) are pivotal. Up to this point in time, David had been a man of utmost honour and trustworthiness before God, and in the sight of his compatriots he was a man committed to the Lord who endeavoured to do everything properly before God. However, after he allowed evil to enter his soul through sexual temptation, his family life and kingly rule became dogged by trouble and distress. A previously unseen dark side of David now comes to the fore in this devious story. It is unpleasant story because the perpetrator is David, God's chosen one to whom had been given the Covenant promise of an everlasting 'dynasty'. Yet this whole episode is a salutary reminder that the best of people fall short of the highest standards of faith.

A private or a public farce? Firstly, it is almost inconceivable that what David did in this passage was in any way 'private'. Messages were normally passed by word of mouth, and where they were written, they would have required the services of a scribe for both writing and reading. It is easy for us to forget things like this when reading an ancient story; the tools and materials for reading and writing were scarce and the skills for using them were reserved for the few. This is why the sins of David, including his scheming in our story today, were probably the stuff of court gossip not later on, but at the time. What David did was this. After he had seduced Bathsheba, he set up a not very subtle plan to try and make it seem as if she had become pregnant by her own husband. The story of this is almost farcical. Joab, the great army commander who had been at David's side for years appears like a puppet to his desires rather than a man of integrity, and instead of the squirming David, it is Uriah who emerges as the one who is honourable before the Lord.

David summoned Uriah, who must have known that something else lay behind David's request for him to go home; Joab had sufficient means in hand to tell the king of the battle (11:7) apart from releasing a man like Uriah who was one of his bodyguards (2 Sam 23:38,39). Uriah himself was a Hittite, and thus a 'resident alien' living amongst the people of Israel, enjoying the protection of the state and fighting in the army alongside the tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, when David invited him to 'wash his feet and go home' (11:8), he knew that this was unacceptable to a warrior of Israel, who was required to abstain from sexual intercourse whilst on service. It would have been an affront to his fellow soldiers to obey the king and 'go home' (11:11). It would have also been clear from David's request that he wanted Uriah to go home to have sex with his wife (the Hebrew language sometimes uses the word 'feet' to refer, obscurely, to 'sex' – see 11:8). The gift that followed him from David's court would have confirmed his suspicions.

A righteous Uriah As the story unfolds, Uriah is the one who continues to adhere to godly principles, staying with the soldiers on guard at the palace gate, identifying with those on campaign and also with the Ark (11:11), and sticking to his principles despite being made drunk by the king (11:13). We have no idea what must have been going through Uriah's mind; whether he found out what was going on from the soldiers of the palace guard, or whether he genuinely sought to expose the king's duplicity. For the first time in the story of David, it is another person, a resident alien faithful to Israel's God, who acts in a godly way rather than the great King.

The consequences of sin Once temptation has been successful and grown into full blown sin, the lie that it appears to offer inconsequential pleasure is always exposed, and consequences always follow. For David, this meant trying to cover up his sin, but the more

David attempted to cover up the situation, the more he made it worse, because he tried to engineer a false solution. The story of Uriah's refusal to 'go home' seems odd to us, but was quite consistent with what might have happened in those days, and David should have known better. However, another consequence of sin is that good judgement is lost. From having been an excellent judge of people and a consummate diplomat, David is reduced to stupidity and actions (fulfilling Psalm 7:15 which speaks about those who do not repent and 'dig themselves a hole into which they fall')

Unfortunately, this sordid story has some way to travel yet before David realises how stupid he has become, and begins a painful process of repentance. When it comes, this repentance is significance and compelling, but the damage had already been done to his life and his dynasty. Such a story has many lessons for us, and few can read this story and not wince, not simply because of what David does, but because the story parallels so much sin and wickedness we know is in the world today. Although nothing is beyond the forgiving love of God, temptation sometimes draws us just about as close as it is possible to get to the boundaries of His love, and this is what happens in this story.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group whether you think that Uriah knew what David was up to.
2. To what extent do you think that sexual sin has been the downfall of other leaders of God's people over the centuries?
3. Is it true that sin works to create more sin? Can you think of examples of this from what you have seen or witnessed?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I have become all too aware of the sins of those who are in leadership through my work in counselling, particularly sexual sin. The consequences are often tragic, and I have seen too many people desperately hurt by what has happened to them. Security in relationships is a fundamental prerequisite for a church leader, as Paul realised and suggested to Timothy (1 Tim 3:1-5). In an age when there is more open and obvious temptation available through all kinds of media, a man or woman of God needs to make sure that they monitor themselves for sexual sin to ensure that they keep Satan at bay.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *How easy do you find it to turn around and confess that you have fallen into temptation's trap? Pray and ask yourself whether there is anything that the Lord would have you confess.*
- *If you know any Christian leaders, pray for them that they may not fall into sexual sin. You may not imagine that this could possibly be a problem for them, and you cannot and do not need to know. Just pray for them.*

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, You continually bring new things into my life. You make me secure in myself so that I can be open with others; you give me gifts so that I can enjoy life to the full; You introduce me to people and lead me into new situations. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your guidance in all this and more. AMEN