



Session 13
Fall 2015
Middler

Nathan confronts King David

2 SAMUEL 11:1-12:15

prepare

PRAYER

God, there are so many situations in our world that need to be transformed by your justice and love. Help us all to see your way and walk in it. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To proclaim God's call for justice

STORY SUMMARY

While the army was away at battle, King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. To cover it up, David arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan told a story about a rich man who demanded a poor neighbor's beloved lamb. The rich man's unfair behavior aroused David's indignation. David then saw the great wrong of his own action and repented with bitter tears.



teaching tips for middler

This session highlights Nathan's confrontation of King David. It focuses on the injustice of David's actions rather than David's adultery. However, you may want to think about how you could address questions about David and Bathsheba. Answer with appropriate detail, but redirect the group back to the focus of the session.

The idea of *justice* can mean different things to different people. Today's session explores the *injustice* of treating others unfairly just because you can. Many middlers will understand this kind of injustice, either because they have experienced it or enacted it themselves.

This is the final session of the quarter. Send home the children's *Glow* magazines and any lingering crafts. Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

A sobering turn

The previous three sessions have told the story of the rise of David, recipient of divine anointing and blessing. The beginning of 2 Samuel continues to report that “the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went” (8:6, 14). But in chapters 11 and 12, David’s story takes a decidedly sober turn. David abuses his royal power for personal gratification and gain, and so falls under God’s judgment. The prophet Nathan steps forward to speak the truth, confronting David with his sin.

From the beginning of this story, David is described as not living up to expectations. It is spring, when the end of winter rains create the dry conditions necessary to wage war. But strangely, in this season “when kings go out to battle” (11:1), King David remains behind in Jerusalem, sending his army to go fight without him.

David sins

Jerusalem at this time was a narrow finger of hilly land with steep valleys on both sides. Houses would have been built on an ascending slope from the valley floor up the hill, with the king’s house at the highest point of the city. It would be easy for someone living at this height to look down on the roofs of the dwellings below and see private activities occurring there. We might be tempted to judge Bathsheba a wanton woman for bathing in public. However, it was *her* roof! And she might have easily assumed the king—like all the men of the city—was out of town, since this was the season for combat.

In coveting another man’s wife and sleeping with her, David breaks two of the Ten Commandments. When he discovers that Bathsheba is pregnant, he seeks to rectify the situation by breaking three more. He plays loose with the truth by seeking to cajole Uriah into breaking a soldier’s vow of celibacy while home on furlough. And David plots to have Uriah placed in the hardest fighting, clearly intending that Uriah be murdered. In manipulating soldiers as if they were his property to command at will, David steals the life of Uriah and paves the way for marriage to his widow, a commendable act by all outward appearances.



Nathan speaks the truth to David

But the God who “looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7) and commanded David’s anointing is displeased. God dispatches Nathan to pronounce judgment. David is not just any ancient king who can add a wife and a son to his harem in a moment of personal caprice. In Israel, even the king is subject to God’s rule. The narrative matter-of-factly reports that Nathan goes to challenge the king. David has amassed immense power and proven himself a valiant warrior, yet Nathan boldly challenges his personal behavior. Even more remarkable, David listens and acknowledges his sin. We would do well to ponder this ancient Israelite practice

of “checks and balances” on royal prerogative.

Nathan demonstrates that prophets can be creative communicators. He does not confront David directly but tells a parable that mirrors David’s personal scenario. As a king with the power to judge, David is drawn into the case of a poor man who loses his one little lamb to a rich man who has herds to squander. When David interrupts the story to pronounce judgment on the wealthy culprit, Nathan turns the mirror on David with resounding judgment: “You are the man!” (12:7).

Then Nathan announces the word of the Lord, recounting all God’s initiatives on David’s behalf and condemning his treatment of Uriah (12:7–9). David’s repentance after Nathan’s pronouncement saves his own life, but judgment falls on David’s family. Consequences are felt through the remainder of David’s reign. Not only will David and Bathsheba’s child die, but later David’s family will be torn by betrayal and violence. David’s son, Amnon, will rape his half-sister, Tamar, and be killed by his half-brother Absalom for this crime. Absalom will revolt against David’s rule and sleep with his father’s concubines “in the sight of all Israel” (2 Samuel 16:20–22), thus fulfilling Nathan’s prophecy (12:11–12).

gather

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Whiteboard or large paper
- Marker

poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)

to do

- Write the categories for Build community on a board or paper.
- If this is your last week with the group, spend some time praying for each child.

media connections

- Internet image search for "Nathan and King David." Which image is closest to how you imagine the scene?
- "King George and the Ducky" VeggieTales video, the scene where Melvin presents the lamb story on flannelgraph
- Internet search for "Judaism 101: Prophets and Prophecy" for a list of prophets in the Old Testament
- Internet search for "donate a sheep" to learn about the difference a sheep can make for a family

BUILD COMMUNITY

Have the following phrases (with the numbers) written on a whiteboard or large paper that everyone can see. Each person can roll a dice and answer the category that corresponds with the number rolled. Children can roll one extra time if they want to share about a different category.

- 1 - something great from the past week
- 2 - something not so great from the past week
- 3 - something you're looking forward to
- 4 - something you wish wouldn't have happened
- 5 - something you love to do
- 6 - something you hate to do

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing "I Lift My Eyes Up" (track 10; *Year Two Songbook*, page 17). Song lyrics are also at the back of *Glow*.

Pray:

God, you are with us even when we do things that are silly or wrong. Help us to listen and love. Amen.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Gather in a circle. Invite volunteers to share things that they would like the group to pray about. If the person who shared is comfortable with this, she or he can stand in the middle the circle. Everyone else can close their eyes and stretch out a hand toward that person while you lead a short prayer for the request. End this time by having everyone cross their hands over their own chests. Lead a prayer thanking God for each one of them and your time together.

Bible memory

Point out the Bible memory poster. Since this is the final session of the quarter, children will likely be able to say the memory passage individually. Or children can write the verses in the shape of a curvy path, looking at the poster only if needed.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

—Psalm 25:4–5

experience

SHARE THE STORY

Have the children find 2 Samuel 11 in their Bibles. Say that today's story is again about King David, but this time they will hear about a time that David forgot to love God and do justice.

Read the story from page 96 in *Shine On*. When you come to Nathan's story, set out one figure with several cotton balls to represent the rich man and his sheep and then four figures with one cotton ball to represent the poor family. When you read about the rich man taking the sheep, put that cotton ball beside the rich man also. Make eye contact with the children as you read the beginning and end of the story; look only at the story props as you tell Nathan's story.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Show the children the picture in *Shine On* as you present the following reflections.

- How would you compare David in today's story with David in the session 12 story? (Briefly show page 94 in *Shine On*.)
- I wonder how David convinced himself that his plan for killing Uriah was a good idea.
- If you were in Nathan's story, would you feel more like the rich man, the poor man, or one of their neighbors?
- I wonder when hearing a story has helped you understand something.
- I wonder what story God would tell you.

PEACE NOTES

David's actions led to violence against Uriah and to violence in his own family. When we make choices that lead away from peace, we can admit wrong and ask forgiveness, as David did. Psalm 51 is understood to be David's prayer admitting wrong and asking forgiveness. Read the Psalm 51 excerpt from page 95 of this guide.

Invite the children to join you in some motions, crossing their hands over their chests when the psalm mentions "me" and raising their hands up when God is named. Have the children stand and close their eyes, using the motions as you read the psalm again.

Option: Play "Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Keith Green. The motions used earlier can also accompany the song.

teaching tip

Most suggested songs can be purchased for about one dollar on online music sites, such as iTunes, Amazon, or Bandcamp. Bring your digital device to easily play the song for the group.



Nathan confronts King David

2 Samuel 11:1–12:15

supplies

- Bibles
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Psalm 51 excerpt (from Additional resources)

storytelling props

- Several story figures (wooden figures, clothespins, or cardboard tubes)
- Several cotton balls

explore

MOVE

Play charades using the Memory game cards. First, briefly review the names on one set of cards and help children remember a few things about each person. Then pile the cards face down. Children can take turns choosing a card and silently acting out the person while the group guesses. (Note that there are two cards for each character.) Limit each turn to thirty seconds and tell the children they can only guess once on each person. The player who guessed correctly can act next, but be sure that everyone has the opportunity to act at least once.

supplies

- Memory game cards (from Additional resources)

RETELL

Use the Conversation sparker from the poster pack to review the story. Take time to discuss any additional questions or thoughts the children have.

supplies

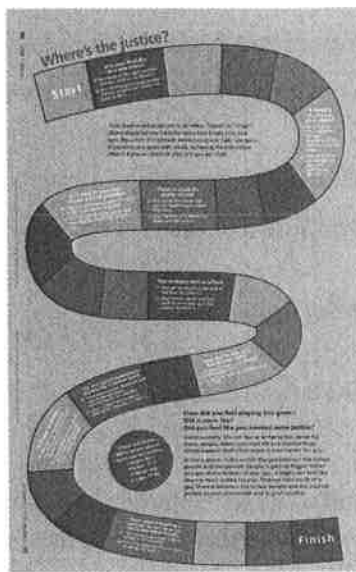
- Conversation sparker (from the poster pack)
- Plastic discs or checkers

GLOW

Read together “Abe’s ball” on page 39 of *Glow*, a modern retelling of Nathan’s story. Invite the children to imagine other ways of retelling the story, making it set in your community. Talk about ways to respond to the situation in “Abe’s ball” or the stories the children generate.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines



CONNECT

Play the “Where’s the justice?” game on pages 40–41 of *Glow*. Assign children to be either “David” or “Uriah.” There should be one David for every four Uriahs. Use different coins or other small items as game pieces. Children can flip a quarter to move; “heads” means move 2, “tails” means move 1. This game is designed to be easy for David to win and nearly impossible for Uriah. Allow some negative reactions, but stop the game when children get too frustrated. Talk about how different players experienced the game and check out the facts and Bible verses listed on the page.

For smaller groups: The game can work with just two people as long as there is one “David” and at least one “Uriah.”

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Coins

other ideas

- Look at some stories Jesus told to help people understand God’s way. (For example, see pages 226, 228, and 230 of *Shine On*.)
- Invite children to mold play dough as they pray about someone they need to forgive or about asking for forgiveness.

bless

PRAY

Gather the children together for a time of prayer and blessing.

Sing "Sizohamba Naye" (We Will Walk with God), from the Shine CD, track 18. Words and music are on page 27 of *Year Two Songbook*. Lyrics are also at the back of *Glow*.

Pray with gratitude for this time together, asking God to bless and guide the children. Mention each of them by name.



SEND

Draw attention to the Remembrance rocks display (or poster) that you used throughout the quarter. Give time for the children to look over the rocks and recall the stories.

Say:

Go in grace, remembering God's presence and goodness in the Bible and with us today. When we do right and when we do wrong, God is with us, encouraging us to walk in the light.

Divide up the Remembrance rocks if children want to take any home. Encourage them to also take their *Glow* magazines and share them with their families.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player

poster pack

- Remembrance rocks poster

Using stories that relate to the subject is effective. After all, Jesus told stories to make a point.

—May Keiser
Quakertown, Pennsylvania

leader's closing prayer

God gets our attention in many ways. We may hear God through a still, small voice, newspaper headlines, Scripture, trusted friends—and perhaps through words from a child.

God, I want to hear you. I need to hear you. May I sense the message you have for me in the events and conversations that fill my life. Amen.