



Session 13
Fall 2015
Junior Youth

Nathan confronts King David

2 SAMUEL 11:1–12:15

prepare

PRAYER

Lord, you are a God of truth and justice. Show me where I need to change my unjust ways and where I need to be a voice speaking up for others. 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 junior youth

The story of David and Bathsheba is difficult on many levels. Junior youth may be embarrassed by its sexual nature, but do not avoid that part of the story. It sounds at times like a soap opera, but today's text shows youth that adults can stumble in major ways—even those who are leaders. It also shows that even if there is forgiveness, violence and deception have lasting impacts.

This story also shows the power of confronting wrong, as Nathan the prophet did. It helps youth realize that God does not turn a blind eye to injustice.

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

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

poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)
- Charades cards (David card with “down” arrow)

media connections

- VeggieTales video “King George and the Ducky”
- Image search for Rembrandt’s *Nathan before King David* or Chagall’s *David with Bathsheba*
- Song “Create in Me a Clean Heart” (based on Psalm 51 presumed to have been written by David after the events of 2 Samuel 11 and 12)
- Internet search for painting and poem “Secret Heart” by Jan Richardson

BUILD COMMUNITY

How has your group grown closer together this quarter? Can you see signs of more openness? Invite each youth to share a high point and low point from the past week. So far, they have only heard of high points in David’s rule as king—God’s promises to him and his kindness to others.

Show the David card with the “down” arrow from the Charades cards (from poster pack). Point to the arrow, but do not read the card. Simply say that today’s story tells of a low point in David’s life, when he commits a shocking act and has to pay a steep price.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Lead from Bible memory into worship time by inviting youth to reflect on different lines of the prayer found in Psalm 25:4–5. Ask these questions to think about: What do you wish to know or understand better? What do you wish God would teach you?

Conclude the time of reflection by singing or listening to “Óyenos, mi Dios,” track 15 (page 24 in *Year Two Songbook*). Lyrics are also found at the back of *L.E.D.*

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

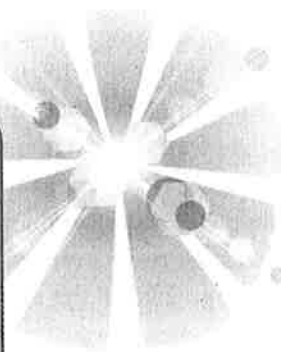
Tell the group that today you will shift from praying the news to praying for people much closer to them. Form a circle, hold hands and pray—about anything anyone wants to mention. In case there is something too personal to share, invite youth to ask for prayer for an unspoken request.

Bible memory

This is the last session with this Bible memory passage. Hide the poster and challenge youth to say it from memory. Listen to any youth who want to say the verses on their own or with a partner, then end with the whole group saying them together (with the poster, if needed). Encourage youth to look at the poster during today’s story.

**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 group open their Bibles to 2 Samuel 11. Today's story is long, but full of action and intrigue. Hand out the Story scripture strips copied from page 95, keeping a copy of the order for yourself. Have youth look up their verses and be ready to read them when you call their number.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Invite youth to reflect silently for a few moments after hearing the intense ending to the story. Then encourage further reflection on some of the following questions:

- Think about all that happened because of what David did. Do you think justice was done? How else might the story have ended?
- The story doesn't tell us Bathsheba's side of the story. I wonder how she would tell this story.
- Think of cultures today where women or servants don't have much freedom of choice. What do we wish could happen for people like Bathsheba today?
- I wonder if David's conscience bothered him *before* Nathan told the story.
- Why do you think Nathan told the story of the rich man and the poor man, instead of just announcing that he knew what David had done?

PEACE NOTES

Show the Charades card of David with the "down" arrow again, and have a volunteer read the low points. David could never make things right with Uriah, but he did his best to make peace with God and himself by asking for forgiveness.

Ask youth to share about a time they did something wrong and tried to cover it up. (Be ready to share your own story as well.) Did they apologize and ask for forgiveness?

teaching tip

Honor the questions that junior youth bring as they struggle with this story. Let ideas emerge from within the group as well as pointing the way to possible answers.

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supplies

- Bibles
- Story scripture strips (from Additional resources)

poster pack

- Charades cards (David card with "down" arrow)

to do

- Make two copies of the Story scripture strips from page 95; cut one apart and keep one intact for yourself.

explore

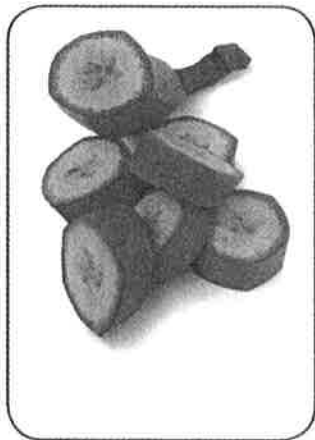
MOVE

Divide the group into teams of two and give each team a banana. Tell the teams to peel their banana and cut it up into eight parts. After they have done that, ask them to put their banana back together. The team that does the best job is the winner. Talk about how it was easy to take the banana apart, but much more difficult to put it back together—and still the banana wasn't the same. Compare this to how quickly David's choices tore lives apart and how impossible it was to put things right.

For smaller groups: Give each person a banana to do the exercise. Do not choose a winner.

supplies

- Bananas
- Table knives



RETELL

Divide into groups of three or four and give each team a copy of the Emoticons from page 96. Groups can retell the story using emoticons. They can model their emoticons after the examples, or design their own. Each group must use at least five different emoticons, but may use each one more than once. Have each group tell the story briefly, holding up their emoticons at different points. Then have them draw an emoticon to show how they think things will go after the story. Read 2 Samuel 12:15–25 to see how well their guesses match up.

For smaller groups: Let youth work individually, or as one team.

supplies

- Bibles
- Emoticons (from Additional resources)
- Paper
- Markers
- Scissors

L.E.D.

Have youth look at the images of justice on page 29 of *L.E.D.* and read the scriptures. Which of these pictures look most like justice to them? What pictures are missing? In the blank square on the page, have youth draw their own images of justice based on the scripture passages and today's story (or the verse in "A little illumination").

supplies

- *L.E.D.* magazines
- Colored pencils

CONNECT

Have youth look up Bible verses to complete the word find about secrets on page 30 in *L.E.D.* Then they can write down the letters not circled to find a message in the puzzle, a quote from Martin Luther King Jr.

supplies

- Bibles
- *L.E.D.* magazines
- Pencils

other ideas

- Review the quarter by playing the game "Ups and downs charades." Use all of the cards except the David card with the "down" arrow. Follow the instructions in Move, session 12.
- Watch the end of the VeggieTales video suggested in Media connections. How does the ending compare with the biblical story? Act out different ways today's story could have ended.

bless

PRAY

Invite youth to listen to or sing along with “God’s Light Shines,” track 8 (page 14 of the *Year Two Songbook*). Find lyrics without music at the back of *L.E.D.* Hand out copies of the Closing prayer litany from page 95 and invite youth to join you in reading it.

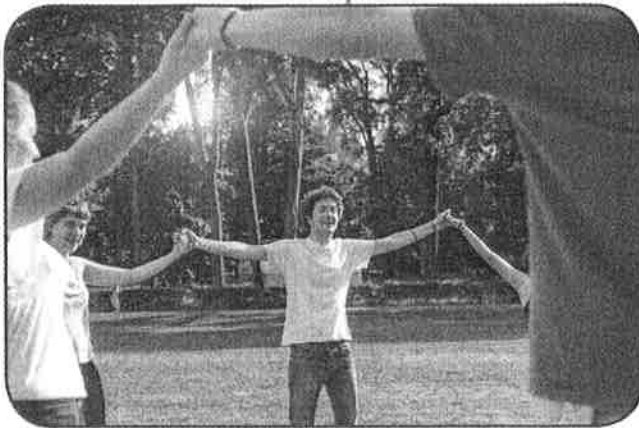
SEND

Send youth with this challenge adapted from Micah 6:8.

**Go, knowing what God desires:
that you do justice, love kind-
ness, and walk humbly with
your God.**

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbook* (optional)
- CD player
- Closing prayer litany (from Additional resources)



It does youth a disservice to teach them that faith is easy. Prepare them for the adult moments when they will find that faith is difficult.

—Elizabeth Melton Bartley
Charlottesville, Virginia

leader’s closing prayer

In a world where power is often abused and so many people never get a fair chance, working for justice can seem like a lost cause. Nathan’s willingness to speak up to the king gives us hope.

God, let me speak your words—words of truth, words of challenge, but words that are uttered out of love for every person made in your image. Amen.