

WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY STUDY SIX

The Integrity of a Courageous Confrontation

2 Samuel 12:1–14

The goal of confrontation is not simply to reprove, it's to restore. It's not simply to point out what's wrong, it's to bring the person to repentance.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN a great leader commits a great sin, he or she can usually pull the wool over the public's eyes and keep it secret. Those closest to that leader, however, aren't so easily fooled.

No doubt, in the aftermath of David's adultery with Bathsheba, the arranged murder of her husband, and the quick wedding, eyebrows were raised and scandalous whispers buzzed throughout the palace. But no one said a word to David or laid a charge against him.

Even so, David was hardly free. The memory of his sin hounded his conscience day and night. Riddled with guilt, David began to deteriorate physically. Listen to his moans of suffering in this psalm:

*When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.
Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. (Psalm 32:3–4)*

Despite his agony, David hardened his heart and did not admit his sin, until finally the courageous prophet Nathan knocked on David's door with a message from God.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Scripture encourages us to “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will . . . find grace to help us when we need it most” (Hebrews 4:16). Draw near to God’s throne in prayer right now. Express to Him your desire for grace as you turn to His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When Nathan came to David, about a year had passed since the adulterous affair. Bathsheba had given birth to a son, which likely prompted joyful celebrations throughout Jerusalem. David, however, was miserable. “My sin is ever before me,” David later lamented (Psalm 51:3 NASB) and pleaded with God, “Oh, give me back my joy again” (51:8).

God gave David plenty of time to repent on his own. Month after month, the Lord waited for sin’s wretchedness to sufficiently soften David’s guilty heart. At just the right time (which may seem like a long time to us), the Lord stepped in. “*Then the LORD sent Nathan to David*” (2 Samuel 12:1 NASB, emphasis added).



Observation: Nathan’s Moment of Truth

Observation is an important first step in *Searching the Scriptures* as we let the words and images of the passage soak into our minds. Read slowly and thoughtfully and take time to experience the swells of emotion. Picture Nathan’s piercing eyes and hear the intensity and passion in his voice. Feel the conflict erupting inside David, the pent-up guilt and heart-wrenching remorse he had suppressed for months.



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Nathan's Disarming Story—2 Samuel 12:1–6

Read Nathan's opening story in *2 Samuel 12:1–4*, noting the sympathy he creates for the poor man and antipathy for the rich man. Why do you think Nathan didn't burst into the throne room shouting accusations? What was Nathan's purpose for first telling a story that David could relate to?

How did David respond, according to *12:5–6*? How do you think David's past played into his outrage (*1 Samuel 16:6–12; 17:28*)?

Nathan's Direct Rebuke—2 Samuel 12:7–12

David's pity for the poor man and anger at evil opened David's heart just enough for Nathan to land his rebuke. According to *2 Samuel 12:7–10*, how did Nathan turn the tables on David? What comparisons did Nathan make between David and the wicked rich man?



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How did the consequences match David's crimes, according to 2 Samuel 12:11–12?

David's Repentance and Restoration—2 Samuel 12:13–14

Instead of rationalizing, justifying, shifting blame, or making excuses for his sin, David simply told the truth: “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Samuel 12:13). What pent up emotions do you think David unleashed when, after months of reluctance, he finally confessed?

Despite the severity of the consequences, how did the Lord show grace to David in 2 Samuel 12:13–14?

David's confession, “I have sinned against the Lord,” is an epochal moment. All his hypocrisy screeched to a halt. Nathan's story did the job helping David repent like nothing else could have done. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Principles for Effective Confrontation

Although God was “displeased with what David had done” (2 Samuel 11:27), He didn’t send Nathan to confront David until a year after David’s behavior toward Bathsheba and Uriah. What does the Lord’s delay teach about His character and response to sinful people?

What does an emotional word picture or story accomplish in confronting a resistant person?

After telling the story, Nathan focused on the facts of David’s sin. What principle does Nathan’s facts-based confrontation exemplify?



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Nathan didn't approach David with a vindictive or superior attitude. Most likely, soft tears flowed from the tenderhearted prophet. What principle does Nathan's attitude convey about the proper tone for confrontation?

Can you think of any other principles from Nathan's example? Record them here.

David's story was not preserved that we might shame him for his wrongdoing. As a consequence of his sin, David's children committed rape and murder. It was dreadful. Though David was forgiven by God . . . David suffered the consequences. And Nathan had warned him properly as any prophet would do. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Confrontation Methods in the New Testament

The teaching on confrontation in the New Testament mirrors Nathan's effective methods. What do the following verses teach about godly confrontation?



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According to *Ephesians 4:14–15*, what do we keep in balance as we select our words and display our attitude?

What did Paul teach in *Galatians 6:1–3* regarding our reasons, goals, and attitudes toward confrontation? What warning did Paul give?

I will tell you from my own experience, confronting is something that is done with great reluctance and often with tears. It's never easy. Confronting isn't about judging but restoring a person in a spirit of meekness. It's about caring enough to confront—never done out of pride and always in private. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Lessons about Confrontation and Confession

Through Nathan's confrontation, David's broken relationship with God was mended. Later, forgiven David declared in relief,

*"Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!" (Psalm 32:2)*

If the red light on the moral dashboard of your conscience is flashing your guilt, don't wait to confess your sin like David did. Openly admit the truth. Be sincere in your desire to break from the sin and display a broken and humble spirit.



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Has the Spirit been revealing a sin to your conscience? If so, use David’s own words from Psalm 51 in a prayer to the Lord: “wash me clean,” “purify me” (51:2), “create in me a clean heart” (51:10), and “forgive me” (51:14). Draw near to the throne of God through Christ and receive His grace. If you wish, you can use the following space to write your prayer.

On the other hand, you might feel the Lord sending you like a Nathan to confront a David. If so, what guidelines from Nathan’s example can you follow?

What word picture or story might you use with this person? Think it through carefully and try to match the sin to the story in a way that touches the person’s emotions.



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What are the facts that you might want to point out, rather than getting sidetracked into conjecture and hearsay?

Write a prayer seeking God's timing, courage, and help. Remember, the Holy Spirit does the convicting; we simply say the truth.

Confrontations are never easy. We always run the risk of straining a relationship or even losing a friend, but the risk is worth the reward when the person is restored. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6 NASB).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, when I must confront someone, please send me. I don't want to go on my own or in my own strength. I need Your words, Your wisdom, and Your love. You long to restore Your sinning child, and I join You in that purpose. May tears of sorrow flow, followed by tears of joy when forgiveness follows confession. In Jesus' name, amen.

