

## Do What Is Right

**In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, . . . David remained in Jerusalem** (2 Samuel 11:1).

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 11:1-13

**Song:** “You Alone Can Rescue”

The domino effect is a chain reaction: one action causes a number of other actions. For example, I didn’t get the oil changed in my car. I started having engine problems. My car overheated, and I found myself stuck on the side of the road . . . I could have avoided all this if I had chosen to get my oil changed when it was due!

As the king of Israel, David was supposed to be off fighting the war against the Ammonites with his men. However, he chose to remain in Jerusalem and then made a series of terrible choices. David was fully aware of what he had done. But instead of being honest, he tried to cover up his actions—adding to his list of wrongs. At any point in time, he could have chosen to stop and to admit what he had done.

Sin can lead to more sin when we refuse to address it. Confession is the only response that God finds acceptable in dealing with our sin. It is the only way to restore our relationship with Him.

**Father**, forgive me for hurting You and others by my sin. Help me to admit what I have done and to change my ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

January 31–February 6. **Amanda Fillebrown** lives in Indiana with her husband. She works for a local Christian community-development organization that serves youth and families in her metropolitan area.

## **Destruction in Desperation**

**The thing David had done [with Bathsheba and to her husband] displeased the LORD (2 Samuel 11:27).**

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 11:14-27

**Song:** “Lead Me to the Cross”

Kitchen fires are scary. When cooking hamburgers in a skillet, a grease fire can start. People sometimes panic and immediately reach for a pitcher of water to pour onto the fire. Instead of putting out the fire, the water immediately boils and flings the burning grease out of the pan. Any fire is a time for clear thinking so we'll make wise choices.

David started a sort of firestorm with his sin. His first attempt to cover up his sin with Bathsheba did not work. In his own desperation, his next attempt was more drastic and led to even more devastating results. David's string of sins and his attempts to hide what he had done displeased God.

Nothing is hidden from God. He knows everything. It may be possible to hide our sins from others, but not from God. When we do try to hide our sins instead of dealing with them immediately, the results are never good. We must be willing to be open and honest with God if we are to find forgiveness for our sins.

Attempts to hide sin from the Lord only lead to destruction. It is better to humble ourselves to confess to God and seek His forgiveness.

**Father,** I am so sorry for the things I have done that displease You. Please forgive me and help me do what is right. In Jesus' name, amen.

## God's Purity

**God is light; in him there is no darkness at all** (1 John 1:5).

**Scripture:** 1 John 1:5-10

**Song:** "Light of the World"

Our entire world is made up of a specific number of elements. When certain elements combine in specific ways, the combination produces something completely different than each of the individual elements. For example, a certain ratio of hydrogen and oxygen combines to make water. Each of the elements, in its pure individual form, is constant. The properties are exactly the same no matter where someone samples it. The elements cannot be broken down chemically. They also react in predictable ways when they are combined in the right proportions with other elements. This provides us some certainty and stability for using God's creation.

God is pure light. Because He is uncontaminated by sin, we can be certain of how He will act and respond. He will always do what is right, and He will respond to us consistently with justice, grace, and mercy. We could not be confident of this if He had even the smallest hint of sin.

Because our God is perfect and pure, we do not need to be afraid to confess our sins to Him. He loves us and invites us to come out of our darkness and join Him in the light. We do not need to be afraid of taking that step. He is a loving God who cares about each of us and wants a relationship with us.

**Father,** thank You for being pure and good. I want to remain in Your light. I confess my sin and ask for Your grace and mercy. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Restore My Joy

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me** (Psalm 51:12).

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:1-14

**Song:** “Living Hope”

The wedding day is usually one of the happier moments of a marriage relationship. A couple enters their union full of love for each other and excitement about what the future holds for them together. Over time, some couples find their initial feelings numbed (or completely gone) as they experience heartaches or disappointment because of choices made or unmet expectations. When not dealt with, these trials can destroy the relationship completely.

David poured out his heart, recounting the destruction that his sin had caused. He asked the Lord to restore the joy that came with his salvation. In the depths of his despair, he desired and believed that he could experience that joy again.

Salvation is a joyous experience because of all the hope and love we have in life with Christ.

But sometimes we might let our joy become buried under the rubble of life’s trials and of our sin. With God, however, joy can be restored. God will never leave us or forsake us; He is always ready and waiting for us to turn back to Him. When we return to Him, He will restore our joy. Our joy in Christ thrives as we welcome His sustaining power for each day of our lives. He has the ability to sustain us no matter what we are experiencing.

**Father**, help me to remember that my spirit may be crushed right now but that I am not destroyed. Please restore Your joy to my life as I seek You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Our Protective Covering

**When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long** (Psalm 32:3).

**Scripture:** Psalm 32

**Song:** “Your Love Never Fails”

Cancer is a terrible disease. My second husband battled renal cancer for most of our marriage. His medications were extremely hard on his body, and so he took a short break from the treatment. But during that time the cancer grew and eventually ended his life.

Sin is even more invasive than cancer, in a different way, because of how it can take over our lives. Like David, we can't cover up our sin or diminish its consequences. Even if we try to keep silent about our sin, God still knows and the consequences still come.

Our best strategy is to strive for obedience to God—staying on His path and avoiding sin. But when we do sin, we must be vigilant in acknowledging our sin to God and to people affected by our actions—and then repent of our sin. We might be tempted to avoid confession because of shame, embarrassment, or fear of consequences. But we shouldn't be afraid, because we can be confident in God's love for us and in His forgiveness. His love never fails. His Word and His guidance will help us move out of failure and return to Him in repentance.

**Father,** thank You for caring deeply about us. Thank You for offering us forgiveness. Help me not to remain silent when I have done wrong, but to confess my sins to You and to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Imitate God

**If anyone obeys [God's] word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did (1 John 2:5-6).**

**Scripture:** 1 John 2:1-11

**Song:** "I Will Follow"

Young children sometimes mimic their older brothers or sisters, following them around while trying to do everything that the older sibling does. Of course the older child often finds this annoying, especially when the imitation is done for the very purpose of being annoying, which is not good. The better reason is when the action stems from respect and admiration—a desire to know and be like the older sibling.

John exhorts us to be like Jesus because of our faith in God, love for Him, and commitment to follow in His ways. Jesus spoke truth and had the righteous actions to match what He said. Every action Jesus took aligned with what He taught and also showed His commitment to the truth of Scripture and His Father's will. And so it stands to reason that if we claim to be children of God, then we must live the way that Jesus did. This requires consistent action on our part in how we obey God and in how we love and treat others—even in our relationships with those we find difficult.

Get to know Jesus by noticing how He lived as our example. Follow in His ways.

**Father**, help me to imitate Jesus by obeying Your Word and showing grace and love to others. Guide me to walk each day in His ways. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Do Not Be Blind

**David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD”**  
(2 Samuel 12:13).

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 12:1-9, 13-15

**Song:** “Run to the Father”

Nose blindness happens when your sense of smell becomes less acute to frequent or familiar scents. This can be a problem when your nose has a less intense reaction to the smell of your kitchen garbage. It is also maybe a bit embarrassing when a guest mentions that you need to take out the trash.

It took Nathan’s pointing out David’s “sin blindness” for David to admit his moral failure and repent of it. Sometimes we might not want to acknowledge our own sin either. There are plenty of deceptive and misleading avoidance strategies to try, such as convincing ourselves that what we did wasn’t all that bad. That is tempting, especially when we think the sins of others are worse than ours.

But sin is sin. It is all bad and wrong. God knows our sin and is very clear that our sins must be dealt with. And the only way to deal with them is by doing what David did—confess and turn away from our sinful ways. Confessing our sin to God and to the people our sin has harmed, and then asking forgiveness opens the door to forgiveness. God forgives us because Jesus already took the punishment for our sin. Don’t be deceived or be kept from recognizing your sin and dealing with it.

**Father,** help me not to turn a blind eye to the sin in my life. Help me to identify it honestly and confess so I follow You more closely in repentance. In Jesus’ name, amen.