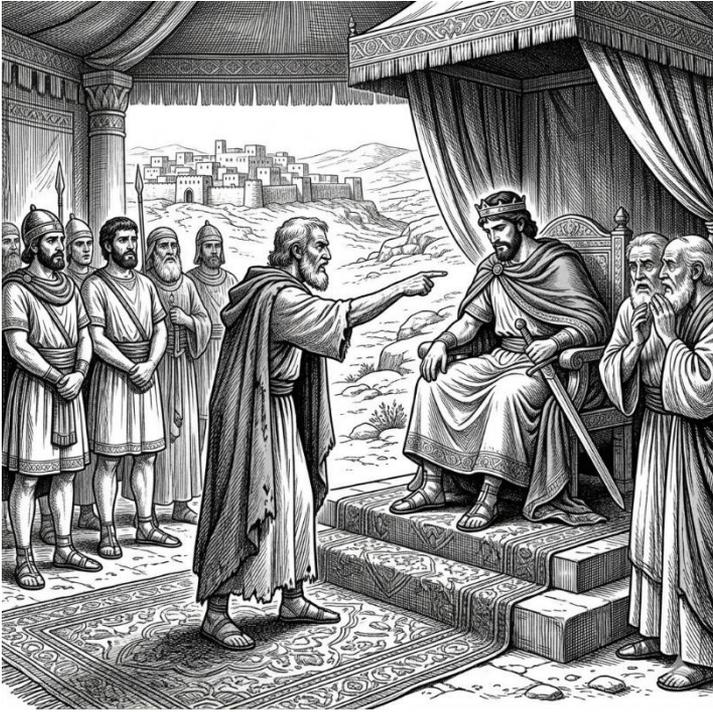


# FAMILY CURSES



## Introduction

How many of these proverbs or warnings have you heard?

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

"What goes around, comes around."

"Curiosity killed the cat."

"Play dumb games, win dumb prizes."

Every generation has at least a handful of sayings it passes down to help the next generation avoid common mistakes. Unfortunately, they don't always yield results.

Children who witness abusive relationships growing up are 2-3 times more likely to engage in one as an adult. Similarly, children with at least one parent convicted of a violent crime are 2-4 times more likely to commit a violent crime. Finally, children with at least one parent experiencing a substance use disorder are 2-4 times more likely to develop one as well.

These statistics highlight how advice alone isn't enough to prevent children from following the poor behaviors modeled by their parents or family members.

✚ **What's a proverb or warning you heard growing up that you still use today?**

## Session Context

A lot changed for Israel and David in the years following David's encounter with Nabal and Abigail.

- Saul died after intentionally falling on his own sword during a battle with the Philistines.
- The kingdom divided after Saul's death.
- Judah immediately recognized David (a fellow Judahite) as king.
- The northern tribes went about 5 years without a central leader before recognizing one of Saul's sons, Ish-bosheth, as king.
- Ish-bosheth reigned 2 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  years and after his death, the elders of the northern tribes went to David to acknowledge him as king.

- David married multiple wives, took numerous concubines, and fathered several children.
- David saw a married woman, Bathsheba, bathing and sent his men to bring her to him.
- David got Bathsheba pregnant while her husband Uriah was away fighting in David's army.
- David tried to cover up his sin by ordering Uriah to come home but Uriah refused to return home while the army was still needed.
- David arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle.
- David married Bathsheba after she finished mourning Uriah.

## Scripture Exploration

### 2 Samuel 12:1-14

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<sup>1</sup>The LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in one city: the one rich, and the other poor. <sup>2</sup>The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>A traveler came to the rich man, and he didn't want to take of his own flock and of his own herd to prepare for the wayfaring man who had come to him, but took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

<sup>5</sup>David's anger burned hot against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die! <sup>6</sup>He must restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity!"

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that would have been too little, I would have added to you many more such things. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the LORD's word, to do that which is evil in his sight? You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken Uriah the Hittite's wife to be your wife.'

<sup>11</sup> "This is what the LORD says: 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did this secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.' "

<sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin. You will not die. <sup>14</sup> However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the LORD's enemies to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you will surely die."

## **VERSES 1-6**

Nathan came to David with a story to expose David's sin. It was common for the king to hear legal disputes. So Nathan presented King David with a story about a rich man who took a poor man's most cherished possession to provide for a temporary stranger.

David immediately recognized the injustice was worthy of punishment by death but issued a merciful decision to have

the rich man pay the poor man back four times what the lamb was worth.

### **VERSES 7-12**

Nathan revealed David was the rich man in his story and shared what God had to say about his sin. God had given David so much and would have given David more if he asked but David's decision to unjustly take what he wanted showed he did not respect God. Nathan went on to pronounce God's judgement on David – God would allow David's family to publicly face persistent violent conflict.

### **VERSES 13-14**

David immediately confessed that he had sinned when confronted. Nathan's reply showed God's mercy since David's actions deserved punishment by death according to the law, but God was not going to take David's life. Nevertheless, Nathan revealed David's sin would come at a cost, including the life of his unborn child with Bathsheba.

## **Life Application**

### **† There are no secrets with God.**

The Bible says God "sent Nathan to David." We are not told how or when God gave Nathan the details of David's sin. It could have been through a dream, vision, or God speaking directly. It also could have been discerned by Nathan learning that Bathsheba had sent word to David she was pregnant and David then ordering Uriah to the front lines of battle.

Sometimes we wonder why sermons or Bible studies feel directed at us. The truth is God sends spiritual leaders to address our sin through the timely messages he gives them to share. Often, they don't know the details of our lives the way Nathan knew

David's. Even when we think no one knows, God does and he loves us enough to openly address our sins, especially when we think we've hidden them.

**+ God has already given us what we need to manage our desires.**

Nathan's story included an important character – the traveler. Many scholars believe the traveler represented David's lust for Bathsheba – temporary and easily controlled by sleeping with one of the wives or concubines David already had.

The world is full of temptations that provoke our desires. A key to resisting them is to remember what God has already given us. We have what we need to subdue our flesh and overcome the temptations that try to trap us.

**+ Sin has a ripple effect.**

David owned his sin without excuse when confronted with it. But his confession didn't change the impact sin had on his family. David's first child with Bathsheba died and his household bore ongoing turmoil including rape, sibling rivalry, and rebellion. God did not cause these problems; he allowed them as consequences of David's sin.

It can be easy to believe forgiveness removes consequences, but even forgiven sin can have earthly penalties. They can be emotional (like guilt or shame), relational (like people disassociating with us because they know our sin), or physical (like health problems). Jesus Christ's sacrifice enables us to avoid the ultimate cost of sin, which is spiritual death. It does not automatically remove the impact of sin which can include generational problems for families.

## Session Reflection

- What types of sin are easier to hide from other people?
- What are some things God has given you that have taken for granted?
- What sins have you seen families struggle with across generations?
- How can we help future generations avoid some of the sins previous generations struggled with?
- What's one piece of advice you would give someone to help them break a generational curse?

