

Hero or Villain?

1. Warm-up question: Tell us something good or bad (large or small) that's happened to you since we last met.
2. We're in the midst of a sermon series about the six "baddest" people in the Bible. King David is not someone you'd expect to be on the list. He was Israel's greatest king, wrote 73 chapters in the Bible, and according to I Samuel 13:14, was "a man after God's own heart." By faith he defended his people from the giant Goliath, he loved his enemies and showed them incredible mercy, and he had a passionate personal relationship with God. But then there came a time when he did something that seemed entirely out of character. Read II Samuel 11, selected verses, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. When you read this story about David, how does it make you feel about him?
 - b. How do you imagine Bathsheba felt?
 - c. How do you imagine David felt about himself when all this transpired?
3. Jeff suggested that we can learn a lot from David's profound failure. It begins with the realization that, if someone as genuinely good as David can do something as awful as he did, so can each of us. David's story stands as a sober warning that under the right circumstances, all of us are capable of great evil. Recognizing our capacity for evil allows us to be reflective and see our failures and course correct instead of spiraling downward. This is the first key lesson we can learn from David: **Being a good person begins with recognizing and acknowledging my capacity to be a bad person.**
 - a. Jeff said, "There's no such thing as good people and bad people. Everyone is a complex mixture of both. Do you agree or disagree – and why?"
 - b. The Apostle Paul once said, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . So I find it to be a [pattern] that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my [body] another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to . . . sin that dwells in my [body]. O wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:15. In your life right now, where are you experiencing the kind of push/pull experience Paul describes – a situation where you want do something really good, but keep doing something bad?
 - c. As spiritual people, we have a tendency to tell ourselves, "We're the good ones, and all the bad ones are out there somewhere." In so doing, we're setting ourselves up because if we tell ourselves long enough that we're one of the good ones, after a while we start to relax and let our guard down. Then when we do

something really bad, in order to maintain our self-image as one of the good people, we have to rationalize and lie to ourselves. So that we can end up doing really bad things, even while living in complete denial. Looking back over your life, has there been a time when (with the benefit of hindsight) you can now see that you were doing something really wrong, but in denial about it?

- d. Churches can also fall into the trap of perfectionism, *i.e.*, thinking they can do no wrong because they are so spiritual. Have you ever been part of a church that did bad things, but was oblivious to it? Have you ever seen our church – LifeJourney – do something bad? Do you agree that it’s inevitable that our church (and any church) will from time to time do bad things?
4. If being a good person begins with recognizing and acknowledging our capacity to be a bad person, that leads us directly to the second great lesson we can learn from David’s example: **Being a good person means owning and confessing our failures, instead of rationalizing and denying them.** When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan, instead of deflecting, he owned his sin. His written confession is found in the book of Psalms. Read Psalm 51, selected verses, as printed on p. 3.
- a. St. Augustine said, “The confession of evil is the first beginning of good works.” What do you think he meant?
 - b. Think about a time when you came clean about something bad you had done – admitting your failure to yourself, God, and others. How did it make you feel to come clean? How did it change the path you had been on?
 - c. Why is it so hard to confess our failures?
 - d. Max Lucado is a prominent pastor and Christian author with more than 145 million books in print. Jeff shared some of Lucado’s testimony about his struggle with alcohol. When he confessed his struggle to his congregation, many in his congregation also began sharing their struggles in a very honest way, creating safe space for the entire congregation. When one person in a family, church, organization, or friendship circle is transparent about their struggles, it seems to create space for others to do the same. Why is that? What happens psychologically and spiritually when confession becomes the norm rather than the exception?
 - e. Let’s practice the spiritual art of confession. What’s a current weakness or failure in your life right now that you’re wanting to own and work on?
 - f. So what’s your verdict on King David? Would you say that he was a good person or bad person? Would you say he’s a hero or villain?
 - g. What’s your verdict on yourself? Would you say that you’re a good person or bad person? Would you say you’re a hero or villain?

II Samuel 11:1-5 and 14-17

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

² It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. ³ David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' ⁴ So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. ⁵ The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant. . . .'

¹⁴ In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.' ¹⁶ As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. ¹⁷ The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well.

Psalm 51, selected verses

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.