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SEE THEIR WORTH



When has your perception of someone changed for the better?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLrelationships

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **37**

THE POINT

When we see others as Christ sees them, we will treat them accordingly.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Let's admit it: we've all been amazed by a magician's trick or illusion. Whether it was making his assistant disappear, sawing a person in half, or even a sleight-of-hand card trick, we've wondered: *How did he do that?*

Later, if we discover how he created the illusion, our amazement vanishes as quickly as the assistant. The next time we see that illusion, it seems so obvious what's actually going on. What changed? We were able to see things from the magician's perspective.

The way we see people can play tricks on us, too. Our perception or opinion of a person can be skewed by our own prejudices and self-centeredness, or even by how we hope that person can benefit us. We can be blinded by our own sinfulness.

But when we see people from God's perspective—the One who created us in His image—relationships change. In a famous story from 2 Samuel 11, King David gave us a tragic example of what happens when we fail to see people from God's perspective.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Samuel 11:1-4

¹ In the spring when kings march out to war, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem. ² One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing — a very beautiful woman. ³ So David sent someone to inquire about her, and he said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite?” ⁴ David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. Now she had just been purifying herself from her uncleanness. Afterward, she returned home.

Sin comes in all sizes and shapes. Some sins are blatantly obvious, others hide in the shadows where we think no one else can see. We tend to categorize some sins as worse than others, but they all share two things in common: all sin is rebellion against God, and all sin begins in the heart.

We see in David a prime example that sin begins in the heart. That may seem ironic, since Scripture refers to David as a man after God’s own heart (see 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Yet he was still a man with a sinful nature—one that was on display throughout his encounters with Bathsheba, her husband, and the many people who witnessed the actions of a man who was supposed to represent God’s righteousness as their king.

As we dig into the text, we’ll find three key stages of David’s downward spiral into sin.

Why is it often difficult for us to see the value in others?

QUESTION #2

- 1. David looked at Bathsheba.** Walking on the rooftop of his palace, David happened to see “a very beautiful woman” bathing. No harm done—yet. It’s easy to see things we shouldn’t, especially in today’s culture. The problem is that David didn’t just glance at Bathsheba and then avert his eyes. He looked, and he kept looking.
- 2. David asked about Bathsheba.** David gazed long enough for his “accidental” sighting to turn to lust. Then he wanted to know who he was lusting for. In the space of a moment, David stopped viewing Bathsheba as a woman made in the image of God. Instead, she became nothing more than an object for his enjoyment.
- 3. David sent for Bathsheba.** Having reduced Bathsheba to an object in his mind, David used his power as king to grab what he desired. We don’t know if Bathsheba responded to David’s summons out of fear or ignorance—nor do we know at what point she understood David’s intentions. What we do know is that Bathsheba’s motives are not the point of the story. It’s David’s motives, as well as his actions, that deserve our scrutiny.

Discussions of this passage usually center on the sin of adultery, which is understandable. Sex outside a marriage relationship was explicitly prohibited in the law (see Ex. 20:14), and David certainly knew that. But behind David’s willingness to commit adultery was an equally grievous sin: failing to see Bathsheba’s worth as a person created by God in His own image.

Put simply, David failed to see Bathsheba as God saw her—and that failure opened the door to sin.

The apostle Paul connected our treatment of others to our walk with Christ. He said God’s will is “that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions. . . . This means one must not transgress against and *take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner*” (1 Thess. 4:4-6, emphasis added).

The way we treat others is supposed to be based on the way God has treated us. Therefore, when we walk with Christ, we see people from His perspective—and we treat them accordingly.

Where do we see people objectified or undervalued today?

QUESTION #3

TRUE VALUE

To see others as Christ sees them is to recognize their inherent value. Use the space below each image to write a few words describing what makes that person valuable in Christ's eyes.



A large, empty rectangular area with a light beige background, intended for writing responses to the images above.

"So God created man in his own image,
he created him in the image of God,
he created them male and female."

— GENESIS 1:27

2 Samuel 11:5-9,14-17

⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to inform David: “I am pregnant.”⁶ David sent orders to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the troops were doing and how the war was going. ⁸ Then he said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king followed him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the palace with all his master’s servants; he did not go down to his house

¹⁴ The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵ In the letter he wrote: Put Uriah at the front of the fiercest fighting, then withdraw from him so that he is struck down and dies. ¹⁶ When Joab was besieging the city, he put Uriah in the place where he knew the best enemy soldiers were. ¹⁷ Then the men of the city came out and attacked Joab, and some of the men from David’s soldiers fell in battle; Uriah the Hittite also died.

David’s downward spiral into sin led him further and further away from intimacy with God. Instead of confronting and confessing his mistakes, David sought to cover up his actions—which led to more sin.

David didn’t value Bathsheba and had used her for his own ends; now, David tried to use her husband, Uriah, to cover up his infidelity. The king planned for Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife while he was in Jerusalem, leading everyone to assume Uriah was responsible for Bathsheba’s pregnancy.

In spite of David’s instructions, Uriah was obedient to the king in another way. He wasn’t a soldier on leave; he was a soldier still on duty. Therefore, he was determined to remain ritually pure—which meant refraining from sexual intimacy with his wife (see Lev. 15:18; 1 Sam. 21:5).

In other words, Uriah showed a greater obedience to his king and a clear devotion to the Lord.

What can these passages teach us about the progression of sin in our lives?

QUESTION #4

Because of Uriah's unwavering loyalty and commitment, David's Plan A was unsuccessful. So, David resorted to Plan B: "David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah." Loyal Uriah unknowingly carried his own death sentence to Joab!

It's hard to see David here as the same man who would not lay a hand on Saul, even when Saul sought to kill him. David presents a tragic example of what sin does when we don't confess it, but instead allow it to spread.

Let's go back to the beginning and see where it all started: David was self-focused. He failed to see people—neither Bathsheba nor Uriah—as God sees them, and he used both of them for his own ends. His self-focused actions led to self-preservation at all costs.

Jesus calls us to a different standard. We are to carry with us the same servant attitude that marks the life of Christ. As Paul wrote: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:3-5).

Had David lived by this principle, he would have placed the truth and the life of Uriah ahead of his own. Of course, had David lived by this principle in the beginning, he would have placed the worth of Bathsheba before his own desires. He never would have gotten into that whole mess in the first place!

We can do better. We can see people as Christ sees them. We can treat them with the dignity and worth Christ has given them.

What are practical ways to seek out the value in others and treat them accordingly?

QUESTION #5



LIVE IT OUT

What steps will you take this week to see and treat others as Christ does? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Evaluate.** People often treat others as objects rather than as God's image bearers. If you've drifted into this tendency, be intentional about confessing your sin and changing your actions.
- ▶ **Restore.** Broken relationships are a great hindrance in the local church. Seek reconciliation and/or forgiveness from someone with whom you've become disconnected.
- ▶ **Fight back.** There are a number of institutions that systematically strip away the dignity and worth of thousands of human beings—human trafficking, pornography, racism, and more. Take a stand to fight against one of these practices in a tangible way.



Our culture has a way of creating illusions about certain types of people: *They don't matter. They're not important. They're expendable.* Don't believe these lies. Instead, look at all types of people the way Christ does, and treat them accordingly.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLrelationships**