

Study Guide  
Series: Lessons from the Wilderness  
“The Wilderness of Sin and Redemption”

**Monday - 2 Samuel 11:1-27.**

David was king of all Israel, respected and loved, but this event wounded his reign, and badly damaged his moral character and leadership. Once David veered off course, each step seemed to flow almost logically from the one before it. Our self-made wildernesses seldom spring full-grown from one huge mistake, but get worse and worse as we try to avoid the results of earlier errors. Have you ever felt trapped in a course of action that seemed to just keep getting worse? What does it take, for David or you, to stop the sequence and move back toward God’s path? Was Bathsheba a naive victim, oblivious to the site of David’s palace? Was she a victim of being powerless to the king’s demands? Or did she maybe hope to seduce the king? The text doesn’t say. Regardless, only David was to blame for his terribly wrong action. No one else can force you to do wrong. Have you heard excuses like “I couldn’t help myself” or “\_\_\_\_\_ made me do it”? What makes it vital for you to recognize that no one else can take away your power to choose to do right?

**Tuesday - 2 Samuel 12:1-14.**

At first, David only seemed interested in covering up his sin. But after Nathan helped David see what he’d done, we read David's response: “David confessed to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you ...’”. David’s deeds were horrible, with severe consequences, yet even David’s sins were not beyond the reach of God’s grace. What does it tell you about God that he forgave David? Is there anything in your life you feel you should own up to and confess to God? As King, David had the power to do whatever he wished. But Nathan had the courage to hold David accountable. Has it ever taken a nudge from someone else or, as in David’s case, a forceful shove, to get you to see clearly some place where you have missed the mark? Do you have one or more “Nathans” who you trust, and who have earned the right to call you to accountability when you need to seek forgiveness for something?

**Wednesday - Psalm 51:1-10, 32:1-5.**

David turned away from his reckless, destructive course after Nathan’s challenge. Psalm 51 reflects the profound spiritual dynamic involved in setting aside excuses, and taking ownership of his errors in order to accept God’s forgiveness and renewed peace. Psalm 32 addressed the inner emptiness that came from concealing what he had done, and the freedom and release that came with letting go of the cover-up mindset. What do you learn from Psalm 51 about what whole-hearted repentance sounds like? When have you been able to talk to God in that forthright, trusting, unqualified tone? Do you find it hard to acknowledge to yourself, others or God that certain things were wrong? Think of times when you have repented (a word that means “turn around, change direction”) and felt your load lighten. What was the experience like to trust in God’s grace, and find the freedom and relief the psalmist described in Psalm 32:5?

**Thursday - 2 Samuel 15:1-16, 16:15-17:14.**

David’s repentance and God’s forgiveness did not wipe out all the consequences of David’s wrong actions with Bathsheba. David’s self-inflicted wound cost him many people’s respect. Absalom, one of his sons, led a major revolt, exploiting that lesser public regard for David. His

initial success drove David from his beloved capital, Jerusalem, and into a new wilderness journey. Absalom was a clever politician, with a knack for telling everyone in his “audience” exactly what they wanted to hear. As you read the account of his “campaign” for the kingship, do you believe he would have been able to keep all of the promises he made to people? Is it possible to offer straight talk and honesty, and yet to work effectively with a variety of people? When have you done this, or seen it done? In this painful crisis, David showed his renewed relationship with God. There was a deep trust in God’s ability to bring things to the right conclusion. At what “wilderness” points in life have you been able to draw strength from your relationship with God?

**Friday - 2 Samuel 18:1-18, 18:31-19:8**

Though many of his wounds were self-inflicted, David avoided the error of letting shame paralyze him. He’d sent a “secret agent” into Absalom’s camp to thwart Ahithophel’s wise counsel. Now he drew on his years of military experience to organize his troops under experienced commanders. What made it important for David to trust God and not succumb to paralyzing shame? Think of times when it has been important for you to act rather than hiding away. Has your faith helped you at those times? Absalom listened to the wrong advice, chose a poor spot for his inexperienced army to fight in, and left himself helpless by his panicky riding. The man who had built himself a big stone monument (chapter 18:18) ended up dead beneath a big pile of stones. How could so poor a leader fool so many people? How can God’s principles help you make wise choices in which leaders you follow?