28 July – 3 August 2024 It’s not fair

2 Samuel 11: 1-15

**David and Bathsheba**

**11**In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

**2**One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, **3**and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” **4**Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. **5**The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.”

**6**So David sent this word to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent him to David. **7**When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. **8**Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. **9**But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master’s servants and did not go down to his house.

**10**David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven’t you just come from a military campaign? Why didn’t you go home?”

**11**Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+11%3A+1-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8271a)] and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

**12**Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. **13**At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

**14**In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. **15**In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

**Bible notes**

King David saw himself as special to God – the apple of God’s eye (Psalm 17:8). Yet what happens in this week’s passage is not David’s finest moment, nor a kingly example others should follow. In spring, kings went out to war (v.1). Speculation is endless as to why David exempted himself, why his focus was not on the welfare and well-being of his army. The commanders may have insisted and refused him (cf 2 Samuel 18:2-4).

Summoned by the king, Bathsheba, a foreigner undergoing her purification ritual according to her adopted Israelite customs (cf Leviticus 15:19-24), was within her rights to refuse. However, the proximity of her home to the king’s palace indicates the high regard the army held for her husband, Uriah. Consequently, refusing an audience with the king might have disrespected her husband. David executed his plan unabated or unashamedly. However, he did not plan for the consequence. Her purification indicates that Bathsheba’s pregnancy and the paternity of her child were not in doubt, which became problematic for David and Bathsheba. Instead of acknowledging his guilt, David devises another unethical scheme, this time to deceive Uriah. Heroically and patriotically, Uriah’s heart and mind were with the army on the battlefield. Neither a luxurious present nor the king’s coercion could persuade him to demobilise (vv.8-11). A naturalised citizen, Uriah displayed the qualities and commitment to the battle that David should have exhibited. However, his loyalty and commitment cost him his life. He was unaware he held his death warrant in his hand.

There is no question – these tragedies are an abuse of power. Is it fair that Uriah's loyalty to the king, his army colleagues, and his nation ultimately cost him his life? Is it fair that commitment to David prevented his household from providing wise and godly counsel? Is it fair that Bathsheba and Uriah became mere collateral damage?

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Uriah’s behaviour stands in stark contrast to David’s. A modern example might be how the inquiry into lockdown parties at Downing Street was contrasted with Queen Elizabeth sitting alone at the funeral of her husband, Prince Phillip. We are called to lives of obedience whatever the circumstances. Where people in authority do the same, our respect for them grows.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A person and person holding apples  Description automatically generated |  |

Questions

* What motivates us to want what others have?  How can we rein in our desire for more?
* Have you ever made a bad choice? What were the consequences? How did you try and rectify it?
* How can you make fair and just choices this week?

##  **Prayer**

*Adapt to your local context.*

**A prayer of thanksgiving**

We thank you, Lord, for setting us high standards by which to live;
rules for the good of ourselves and others.
We praise you for those who try to live by your commands,
especially those in leadership roles who should set an example,
but who struggle just like the rest of us.
We thank you for standards and a spirit of harmony
that holds communities and families together,
encouraging us to make sure no harm is done to anyone.
We praise you, O Lord, for having our good always in mind.
**Amen.**

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

Caring God, we ask you to be with us this week.
Open our eyes to see people as you see them,
make us a blessing to all who are affected by our choices,
whether they are right in front of us or far away.
Help us to live by the values of your kingdom,
which is fair and just,
and to value all people as made in your image.
**Amen.**

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