

A few years ago, Christian author and speaker Liz Curtis Higgs started talking about how God had reached into her life, and despite all the things she had done as a very bad girl, he saved her, and she turned her life around. Out of that testimony came her book series, “Bad Girls of the Bible.” Lent is the season for us to reflect on why Easter was necessary—it’s necessary because we all have enough bad in us to require a savior. Over the next few weeks we’re going to look for life-lessons in God’s work in the lives of the “Bad Girls of the Bible” for application in our walk with God and with one another. And by the way, these reflections are totally stolen from Liz Curtis Higgs.

Tonight’s lesson is about Bathsheba, the bathing beauty King David took as his lover.

OPENING PRAYER

2nd SAMUEL 11:1-5

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. ²One 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, ³and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this 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. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. ⁵The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.”

Wrong place—wrong time—wrong person—wrong reason: This is the David and Bathsheba fiasco in a nutshell. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

We read that **“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” (v.1).**

Spring was a good time for war. The roads were in decent shape and there was plenty of fodder in the fields for soldiers to feed their horses.

But why when the king's men with the king's horses have gone to war is the king still at home?

We're not told but we can guess that because David was about 50 years old and sleeping on the ground and eating rations with the troops was not as much fun as it was in the olden days, he had decided that war was a young man's game. But as one wise old preacher once wrote, "When we are out of the way of our duty we are in the way of temptation." Or someone else, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

We read, **"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" (v.2).** Was David suffering from insomnia or boredom? We don't know. But Roof Walking David soon turned into Peeping Tom David.

Many ask the question, what was going on with Bathsheba herself? Was she intentionally bathing nude below the king's roof trying to tempt him? Or was she indoors and he saw her through an open window? Perhaps she was in an enclosed courtyard? In other words, what part did she play in this?

The Bible does say that David **"saw a woman bathing."** There's nothing about Bathsheba seeing him, or acknowledging him, or giving him the nod, or even a wink. Nothing.

But David saw her, and, as we read, **"The woman was very beautiful."** That phrase for beauty is only used to describe a couple of other exceptionally attractive characters in the Old Testament, such as Rebekah (Jacob's too beautiful-to-be-true wife) and King David himself. The word suggests a certain amount of sensual appeal. David and Bathsheba must have made a striking couple. A feast for the eyes, as it were.

In the midst of his misery, Job reminded God of his own righteousness with a vow he himself had taken. He said, **"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look**

lustfully at a girl” (Job 30:1). It was too bad King David hadn’t made such a covenant with his eyes.

Rather, like Eve in the Garden reaching for that beautiful piece of fruit with her hands outstretched, David let his eyes and his imagination lead him astray, and we read, **“David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” (v.3)**

Her dad was Eliam, an important man, with an important name, which meant, “The God of my people.” Her husband was Uriah the Hittite, who was already a living legend and a saint among fellow soldiers in David’s army. Red flags were popping up all over the place, or at least they should’ve been.

And did you notice that the messenger provided the information in the form of a question? **“Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”**

Sounds like a warning, as in, “Hey, Mr. King, don’t do it. I know how you’re feeling. In fact, none of us can believe Uriah got this super babe, but hey, he did, and so let’s just leave this alone.” And so forth.

But it was to no avail. Stopping a man who is on a mission to fulfill a burning love interest is next to impossible, especially if he’s the king!

We read, **“Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home” (v.4).**

Notice it was more than one messenger whom David sent to get Bathsheba. Did they kidnap her? Persuade her? Create a story about her husband, as in, The king has some important news for you about Uriah?

But it didn’t matter, did it? Because this was not about how all this happened, but it was about why it happened. And why it happened had to do with power, David’s power as king, the power to do whatever he wanted to do and to have whomever he desired.

That's a big part of the lesson of this story, that when I let my body take control over my destiny, I am capable of making the same fatal mistake David did. Indeed, we cannot judge him for he is nothing more than a mirror for our own sinful nature.

Had I been David, I would have commanded Bathsheba to come and I would have relished the authority to do so.

Had I been Bathsheba, I would have convinced myself I had no choice in the matter and bowed to David's royal decree, secretly grateful to submit to such a powerful man. We don't know how she felt, but we do know that **"She came to him, and he slept with her."**

Try to fight the temptation to romanticize this scene with candlelight and soft music. Nowhere does love factor into the equation. It was about nothing more than power and sex.

Since we are talking about Bad Girls, we must ask the question, how much was Bathsheba to blame for all this? Was she a virtuous victim or a villainous vamp? We have no backstory on her besides what we know about her dad and her husband. And she hardly said a word, unlike David's wife Michal, who was a real chatty-Cathy, who's big mouth got her in big trouble.

There seem to be two possibilities. Some say Bathsheba was an adulterous wife who schemed to gain prominence for herself and her future son, that the night of passion and everything that followed was all her fault. Others say, however, that she doesn't fit the wicked woman image of a temptress, but rather she appears to be nothing more than an innocent victim of David's lust, entirely at his mercy.

Neither choice is particularly enticing. If she was the villainous vamp, then she had no one to blame but herself, and we're left with a whole bunch of problems concerning David's responsibility for what happened later on. But if she was a virtuous victim, then David raped her. And this is even worse!

Either way, Bathsheba's actions and motives cannot be changed. However, our actions and motives can be changed. When we find ourselves confronting temptation, we can say no. We can remember how David was drawn in by what

he saw, and how he could have turned around and gone back to bed; or visited with one of his many wives or concubines; or suited up, jumped on a horse, and gone out to visit his men who fought for Israel at that very moment.

The Lord always provides an exit plan. That's why God keeps bringing us together. He wants us to learn about the exit plan for resisting temptation.

There's no question that David started this little skin game, but there's also not a word that suggests Bathsheba put up a fight. All we know is that she arrived in David's bedroom tip-toe clean. We read that **"(She had purified herself from her uncleanness.)"** I'm not going to get into the details here, but when David saw her bathing, she was in the middle of her monthly cycle; she was fertility central!

And wouldn't you know it, we read in the next verse, **"The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant" (v.5)**. And it was all downhill from there. We know the story: David killed Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband; God slayed Bathsheba and David's first baby; Nathan the prophet confronts David, who finally repents for committing adultery and murder; and the Lord relents with his wrath and restores David and gives him and Bathsheba more children, one of whom was Solomon, the third and final king of a united Israel.

But that was the long way around, wasn't it? Bathsheba could've worn a big JUST SAY NO button on her bathrobe, not unlike Peter's admonition later on: **"Resist (the devil) and stand firm in the faith" (1st Peter 5:9)**. Even at the palace, she could've resisted the king, after all her dad and husband were hotshots in the king's entourage. She wasn't absolutely helpless. Even when she discovered she was pregnant, she didn't have run to David. But she could've told Uriah and asked him to forgive her and the king.

David should've had better intel going on concerning who was affected by this insanity of his. But that's the problem with insanity, right? It's insane. But if he had put on his thinking cap he would've realized that the most offended party in this whole thing was going to be God himself, and that this couldn't possibly turn out well in the long run.

In Psalm 51 he wrote his confession for this very incident. He wrote, **“Against you (O Lord), you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Psalm 51:4).**

During Lent let us reflect on the insidious nature of temptation and how one thing always leads to another. That is a lesson that David and Bathsheba finally figured out, that it is a lot easier not to get on the merry-go-round of sin than to get off it once its already in full swing.

This week let us think about the weightiness of sin. David realized what he had done was an offense to God himself. He looked at his life through the prism of eternity, and thus he grasped his mortality while at the same time he was able to take hold of God’s grace and love and mercy in all its fullness, the very depth of the Lord’s forgiveness—which he desperately needed—on the other.

And this week let us share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.