WHAT IF . . . ?
What If You Should Confront Someone in Sin?
2 Samuel 12:1–14

LET'S BEGIN HERE

Living by grace does not mean living without accountability. No one ever showed people more grace than Jesus did. And because He loved people, He confronted them when they moved in a wrong direction.

Chuck Swindoll explains what *confrontation* is and is not:

> It's love in action. It's caring for another's welfare—helping someone realize he or she is headed for trouble, for danger, if nothing changes. And the proof of your love is that you will not look the other way. It doesn't mean that you want to gain control over the person or legalistically put that person under your thumb. You see, there's a vast difference between confronting another one who needs to hear it and trying to control that other person so that he or she becomes like you.

One of the finest examples of caring confrontation in Scripture is Nathan's confrontation of David who had sinned with Bathsheba. Let's use our *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to dig deeper into this episode and learn what to do if we confront someone in sin.

YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Correlation is one of the four central components of inductive Bible study:

- *Observation*: observe the text of Scripture.

- *Interpretation*: probe the meaning of Scripture.

- *Correlation*: compare the truths of Scripture.

- *Application*: apply the wisdom of Scripture.

Quotable

What is confrontation? It's love in action. It's caring for another's welfare—helping someone realize he or she is headed for trouble, for danger, if nothing changes.

—*Charles R. Swindoll*

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By correlating Bible passages about Nathan, we add color to our character sketch of the man who confronted David. A helpful resource is *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, which is available through the Insight for Living Ministries online store. In this Bible dictionary, the entry, *Nathan*, lists five individuals by that name. Interestingly, David named one of his and Bathsheba's sons Nathan (1 Chronicles 3:5)—perhaps in tribute to the man who had the courage and concern to confront him!

The prophet Nathan was part of David's life long before confronting him. Nathan first appeared in Scripture encouraging David to build the temple (2 Samuel 7:2–3). But after a vision from the Lord, Nathan told David that God had not chosen him to build the temple; instead, God would build a "house" for David—that is, a line of kings from his descendants. David's was no ordinary dynasty, however.

What makes God's covenant with David central to the story of the Bible and God's redemptive plan? Compare the following passages, and write down your findings: 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:34–37; Isaiah 9:6–7; Luke 1:30–33.

After confronting David, Nathan helped secure the proper succession of David's line. How did Nathan help pass the royal scepter to God's chosen son—the one divinely ordained to build the temple? Read 1 Kings 1:11–30, and record what you find.

What other influence on David's household did Nathan have regarding his writings and his sons' involvement with Solomon? Read 1 Kings 4:5; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29.

What does your study reveal about the nature of Nathan's relationship with David?

An Example of "Tough Love"

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend," the proverb states (Proverbs 27:6 NASB). God called upon Nathan, David's friend, to inflict on him a deep surgical wound—not to destroy David but to save the patient's soul.

David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba began as all cancers do, in secret and almost undetectable. But then the diseased cells multiplied to include a cover-up of her pregnancy, an arranged battlefield killing of her loyal husband Uriah, and a scandalous marriage. Read the sordid affair in 2 Samuel 11, which concludes with this pronouncement: "The Lord was displeased with what David had done" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Searching the Scriptures Study Tip

Chuck Swindoll recommends using your imagination to step into the biblical text and fully engage with the emotion and meaning of the scene. Try this technique as you read 2 Samuel 12:1–14.

Step into the shoes of Nathan—a friend of David and his family—as God revealed to him the extent of David's sin and commanded Nathan to confront him (2 Samuel 12:1). Write down what you imagine were his thoughts and feelings.

What was the purpose of Nathan's story (12:1–6)? And what made it so effective for David, who once was a poor shepherd himself?

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Observe carefully the text of Nathan's words of confrontation in 2 Samuel 12:7–14. With what components of his confrontation can you identify? It may help to divide the section into three parts: 12:7–9; 12:10–11; and 12:13–14.

Nathan's story gives David an emotional word picture that gives him *sight*—a visual image that touches his heart. Then Nathan speaks directly: "You are that man!" (2 Samuel 12:7). This turns the window into a mirror which gives David *insight* into his true nature. But Nathan doesn't abandon David in his sin. He gives him *vision* of the reality of the consequences along with the *hope* of forgiveness. "The Lord has forgiven you" (12:13).

How do these components work together to make the most effective confrontation model?

What to Remember When Confronting Others

Chuck offers six guidelines for confronting as Nathan confronted David:

- *Let God lead.* The Lord sent Nathan. So also when we confront, we must sense God's leading.

- *Choose the right time.* Pray for the best time to have the conversation, choose a private place free from distraction, and speak face to face.

- *Speak the truth.* Do your homework so that you can concentrate on accuracy and focus on objective facts.

- *Use wise words.* Nathan used a story. When you confront, use an emotional word picture to soften the person's heart and bring down his or her defenses—rather than put the person on the defensive by issuing an accusation before he or she is ready to hear it.

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- *Always offer hope.* Your goal is always restoration through forgiveness, not condemnation and shame.

- *Leave the results with God.* You may not get the response you hoped for. Still, you have done your part. Let God continue to work in the person's life.

Is the Lord leading you to confront a friend or family member whom you love? Use these guidelines in formulating a plan.

Two final thoughts from Chuck Swindoll conclude our study:

[Confront] with tears, never with pride, never with joy. Your heart is broken, and because it's broken you have to say something because you care about that individual.

Confrontation is to be a gentle experience, not shameful. Not yelling, harsh anger, but gentleness lest you, too, one day fall under the same temptation.

A FINAL PRAYER

Father, give me courage. Give me great grace. Give me good timing as I wait on Your leading as You work patiently in the lives of those I care about. In this period of grace, I pray that You soften the heart of the sinning person and use me to open the door for Your Spirit to heal and restore. Amen.

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Tools for Digging Deeper

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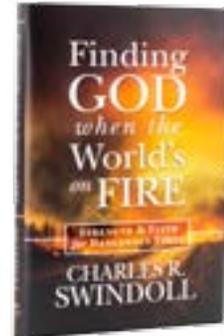
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration
with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

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