

9

Facing Temptation

2 Samuel 11

In *Lake Wobegon Days* Garrison Keillor describes a priest named Father Emil, who presides over Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility Catholic Church. Every year Father Emil faithfully delivers a sermon on the evils of birth control. He titles it “If You Didn’t Want to Go to Minneapolis, Why Did You Get on the Train?” His point, of course, is that if we want to avoid certain consequences, we must avoid certain actions.

GROUP DISCUSSION. How do you respond when you hear that a respected Christian leader has committed a serious sin?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. How do the potential consequences of your actions affect your daily behavior?

The story of David and Bathsheba reveals how a series of smaller sins can build to tragic and devastating results. We also discover what forces can lead “a man after God’s own heart” to commit adultery and murder. *Read 2 Samuel 11.*

1. Sin often begins with a series of temptations, each one leading to the next. What steps led to David’s sin with Bathsheba (vv. 1-5)?

2. At each stage of his temptation, what might David have done to keep from taking the next step? (Be specific.)

3. Why do you think Satan often entices us with a series of temptations rather than offering us one “big” temptation?

4. At what point does a temptation become sin?

5. What plan does David devise to cover up his sin (vv. 6-13)?

How does Uriah thwart David’s plan—at least initially?

6. Why are we tempted to cover up our sins rather than to confess them?

7. When deceit fails to work, how does David’s plan become vicious (vv. 14-15)?

8. What other people does David draw into the wake of his sin?

9. As you look back over this chapter, how would you explain what led “a man after God’s own heart” to commit adultery and murder?

10. In what specific ways can David’s experience be a warning to us?

Ask God to guard and protect you from seemingly “small” temptations. Pray that he will enable you to stop the snowballing effect of temptation and sin.

Now or Later

Thomas à Kempis said, “The process works like this. First, the thought is allowed to enter into our minds. Second, the imagination is sparked by the thought. Third, we feel a sense of pleasure at the fantasy, and we entertain it. Fourth and finally, we engage in the evil action, assenting to its urges. This is how, little by little, temptations gain entrance and overcome us if they are not resisted at the beginning. The longer we let them overcome us, the weaker we become, and the stronger the enemy against us” (Quoted in Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, *Devotional Classics* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989], p. 85). How does this quote give you insight into the nature of temptation and sin?