

Sermon Title: How Did We Get Here?

Series: Seeking God's Kingdom, Part 43

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11

Main Takeaway: When temptation comes, turn to Jesus. He strengthens us to stand firm and welcomes us in forgiveness when we turn back to Him.

You know, sometimes God tests us.

But does He ever tempt us?

A while back, we started saying the Lord's Prayer together at the end of my pastoral prayer. We keep copies of it in the pews.

You may have noticed that the pew copies say:

"Lead us not into "testing"...

Instead of "lead us not into temptation."

Why the difference?

Well, the Greek word Matthew records can mean *testing* or *temptation*.

Now, the fact is, most English translations use the word *temptation*...

But I actually prefer the word *testing*...

Because it helps clarify something about God's character:

God may test our faith, but He never tempts us into sin.

James makes that distinction...

[SLIDE 1] Testing vs. Tempting

- **James 1:3 - ...the *testing* of your faith produces perseverance.**
- **James 1:13 - When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, *nor does he tempt anyone.***

So when we pray, *“lead us not into temptation...”*

We’re asking God to protect us from the things that would draw us away from Him.

And when we pray, *“Lead us not into testing...”*

We’re asking God to deliver us from the trials of life that may come our way.

Either way we pray...

We’re admitting that we need the LORD’s protection and help.

But again, when we’re tempted...

We can’t blame God.

James goes on to say...

[SLIDE 2] James 1:14–15 — “Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

This is what happened with David.

The passage never says that God arranged this as a test...

David was tempted by his own desires.

You might remember how Abraham was tested with his son Isaac?

Genesis 22 says right out of the gate:

“God tested Abraham.”

That’s not what we have here with David in 2 Samuel 11.

God wasn’t responsible for testing or tempting David with Bathsheba.

And honestly...

That’s why it’s so hard to read.

David’s been through so much...

And I feel like we’ve really been rooting for him every step of the way!

He trusted the LORD against a giant...

He refused the opportunities to kill Saul...

He’s constantly seeking the LORD’s wisdom and strength...

He's experiencing the LORD's love and faithfulness...
He knows what it's like for the LORD to deliver him from evil...

But now...
Almost out of nowhere...
David gives in to temptation.

I was telling Mike and Sonia that this reminds me of that saying...
"Never meet your heroes"...
Because you'll probably be disappointed.

This feels like that kind of let down.

But to be fair...
We already knew David's not perfect...
We've seen some cracks in his character...

In 1 Samuel 25, when a man refused to help him...
After David and his men protected him in the past...
He was ready to kill them all.

And in 2 Samuel, we see David taking multiple wives...
Which was against the Law Moses laid out in Deuteronomy.

So just because David was the LORD's choice to be Israel's king...
That doesn't mean he was perfect.

But that's not to say we should just excuse his actions.

David chose to go down an extremely dark path.

But why?

How could someone so loyal to the LORD fall so hard?

Let's take a closer look at what happened...

[SLIDE 3] 2 Samuel 11:1 - 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.

So David's fighting the Ammonites again...
 I guess they took the winter off...
 But now the fighting is back on...

But this time David stayed home.

And you know...
 David has stayed home before while his men went out and fought...
 So there's nothing too unusual about that...
 Sometimes kings went out to the battlefield...
 Sometimes they didn't.

So for whatever reason, David chose to stay behind.

[SLIDE 4] 2 Samuel 11:2a - One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace...

I actually wondered if this was normal for him?
 I mean... Just thinking about myself...
 Sometimes I'm up two or three times per night!

We don't know why David got up...
 But one commentary I read said that:
 Maybe he got up and walked around the roof because it would've been hotter inside the palace than outside during that time of year.¹

Who knows?
 But while he was walking on the roof...
 Someone caught his eye...

[SLIDE 5] 2 Samuel 11:2b - ...From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful...

The roof of David's palace was probably the highest point in the city.

This actually reminds me of when Satan took Jesus up to a high place.

¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel–2 Kings (Revised Edition), ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 429.

In Matthew 4, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and said...
"All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me."

Satan was trying to tempt Jesus with what He could see...
 But instead of taking Satan's offer...
 Jesus relied on the Word of God.

But here in 2 Samuel...
 David's high above the city...
 It's evening...
 It's probably dark, or at least getting dark.

My guess is that Bathsheba expected to have some privacy....
 But instead, David's eyes were watching her...
 And out of his desire...
 The seed of sin was planted...

[SLIDE 6] 2 Samuel 11:3 - ...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."

Honestly, just the glimpse of her should have prompted him to go back inside.
 But instead, he took it one step further by asking someone who she was.

That's when he found out she was Bathsheba...
 The daughter of Eliam.
 We don't know much about her father...
 But it seems that Eliam is from a family that served David closely in the military.²

So it's actually possible David knew Eliam, Uriah and even Bathsheba...
 Maybe he just couldn't tell it was her from the roof?

And so he sends for someone to identify her...
 Finds out she's married to Uriah...
 That fact should've definitely stopped him...
 But once he knew who she was...

[SLIDE 7] 2 Samuel 11:4 - David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her ... Then she went back home.

² 2 Samuel 23:39

The details are pretty sparse...
There's just so much we *don't* know...

Like...

I wonder if the messengers knew why they were sent?

And why was there more than one messenger?

And what did they say?

I could imagine it going a couple different ways.

Maybe they were like:

"Excuse me ma'am, but the king would like an audience with you."

Or maybe it was more of a police escort, like:

"Ma'am, you're gonna need to come with us."

And I wonder what was running through Bathsheba's mind?

Her husband was fighting in the war...

Maybe she feared something happened to him?

We don't know.

And by the way...

We don't know if she could have refused to go to David.

In fact...

We don't really see it in English...

But the Hebrew puts the responsibility squarely on David...

It says he "sent messengers **and he took her.**" (v4 NIV = "to get her")

And so...

Even a polite invitation from the king would've carried the weight of his authority.

Again, I have a lot of questions.

But at the end of the day, all we know is that...

David was tempted by what he saw...

He acted on this by sending messengers to take her.

She came to David.
 He slept with her.
 And she went back home.

The biggest thing to notice is that...
The king *took* what he saw.

And judging from how David tried to cover up his sin...
 It seems to me that he knew what he did was wrong.

And maybe he would've been able to keep it a secret...
 But then David got a message...

[SLIDE 8] 2 Samuel 11:5 - The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Now what?!

You can't hide the fact that Bathsheba's pregnant when her husband wasn't around...

So rather than own up to what he did...
 David tried to cover it up.

He had Uriah come back from the battlefield.
 He asked him how the war was going...
 How the soldiers were...
 And when it was time to call it a night...
 He told Uriah to go home...

But Uriah didn't go home.
 Instead, he slept among the servants by the entrance to the palace.

So David said to him...

[SLIDE 9] 2 Samuel 11:10 - "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

He's thinking:
If you would just go home and be with your wife...
Everyone will think the baby's yours!

[SLIDE 10] 2 Samuel 11:11 - Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, 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!”

It’s interesting that at first...

David was tempted, and he gave in.

Now he’s the tempter...

And he’s not giving up.

So he invited Uriah to stay one more day...

[SLIDE 11] 2 Samuel 11:12-13 - So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 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.

When it was clear that Uriah wouldn’t give in to the temptation to go home...

David took drastic measures...

[SLIDE 12] 2 Samuel 11:14-15 - In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. 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.”

David’s making Uriah carry his own death warrant!

Think about the betrayal in that!

And who’s he supposed to deliver the letter to?

Joab!

Joab was the guy who committed murder back in chapter 3 and got away with it because David couldn’t do anything about it.

David said “I am weak.”

And now that same weakness has led him to the point where he’s about to commit the same kind of crime.

To me... This whole scenario is just crazy!

I mean... *What was David thinking?!*

David was known for trusting the LORD...

He was faithful to the LORD and to his people.

He was the one who almost always went to the LORD in prayer!

So how did we get here?!

You know...

You might remember when I made a big deal about the fact that

When Joab was pursuing Abner in chapter 2...

Abner called out to Joab and said:

[SLIDE 13] SLIDE with Abner and David

2 Samuel 2:26 - “Must the sword devour forever?”

But now David said to Joab...

2 Samuel 11:25 - “The sword devours one as well as another.”

Abner asked that question to stop the killing...

But David uses the same words to justify it.

Well, you heard the rest of the story...

Joab followed David’s instructions.

Uriah died on the front lines...

But not just him...

Other soldiers alongside him died as well.

Then, after a time of mourning...
David took Bathsheba to be his wife.

And at this point...
David might be thinking he got away with it...

But chapter 11 ends with a bomb...

[SLIDE 14] 2 Samuel 11:27 - ...But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

This is the only time the LORD is mentioned in the entire chapter.

The writer's letting us know that David thought he kept his secret...

But in reality, the LORD saw the whole thing.

I'm reminded of 1 Samuel 16...

[SLIDE 15] 1 Samuel 16:7 - The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

What David did was evil in the eyes of the LORD.

That should make us wonder:

*What does Jesus see in my heart that other people don't?
Am I entertaining desires that I shouldn't?
Am I making excuses for myself and trying to hide my own sin?*

This is where the Lord's Prayer is helpful...

*Lead me not into testing (or temptation)...
But deliver me from evil.*

When we pray that...

We're asking the LORD to protect our hearts.

We're asking Him to help us recognize what's pulling us away...

And to give us the strength to say no.

And when He shows us something we need to turn away from...

It's up to us to obey.

But it starts with going to the LORD first.

The Apostle Paul would say this is how we stand firm against the devil's schemes.³

When temptations rise...

We turn to Jesus.

Hebrews 4 says...

[SLIDE 16] Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted just like we are.

But the difference is, He never gave in to sin.

And so the writer of Hebrews encourages us...

[SLIDE 17] Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We don't have to wait until we're good enough to approach God...

We can approach the throne through prayer...

Asking Jesus for help...

Asking Him to "deliver us from evil"...

³ Ephesians 6:10-13

Jesus *wants* to help us in our time of need.
But are we willing to turn to Him?

The reality is that...

Sometimes we make excuses that keep us from coming to Him.

I was recently watching a podcast episode where the host admitted he's in recovery.

He said...

*"I had a bad drug problem for a long time...
I got sober, found God more...
I always believed in God, but for some reason...
[My belief in God] wasn't enough to keep me from doing drugs
and stuff like that."*⁴

Thankfully he's no longer doing drugs...
But my point is that we can believe the LORD...
And still make excuses for something we know is wrong.

David believed in the LORD...
But he also knew what he was doing was wrong.

I don't know what excuses he was making in his head...
But whatever they were, he kept choosing what he wanted...
No matter who his choices affected.

So, I know today's message is pretty heavy...
But I hope you're sensing the encouragement...
We can bring *anything* to Jesus...

No matter how we're tempted...
No matter what we've done...
We can lay it all before the LORD in prayer.

⁴ Tin Foil Hat Podcast – Down the Rabbit Hole with Ninjas Are Butterflied (1026); begins around 51:26

He wants us to ask for forgiveness...
For His protection from the evils that tempt us...
And for the strength to turn away from it.

And so, I'll leave you with some encouragement from the New Testament...
Paul said...

[SLIDE 18] 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 - If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ... And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Following the LORD for years doesn't make us immune to temptation...

But there's always hope...

There's always a way out.

But the key is that we can't do it on our own.

We have to be willing to humble ourselves and surrender our desires to the LORD.

And when we do...
Jesus will strengthen us so that we can stand firm...
No matter what the enemy throws our way.

Let's Pray