

Dealing with Denial

2 Samuel 11:1-5

I like this bumper sticker, **“Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.”** The truth is that all of us have aberrations in life that the Bible just calls sin. We are all weak because of our flesh and as a Christian, that disrupts our happiness. None are perfect and none are without sin. Sin is everyone’s enemy. We each struggle with sin.

It may be that we struggle with drugs or pornography; or alcohol; or overwhelming anxiety or depression; with resentment or, bitterness; controlling our tongues or tempers. Whatever it is, we all have some defect or some problem that is our own doing. Romans 3:23 says, ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”***

“If you can start the day without caffeine, If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains, If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles, If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful, If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time, If you can take criticism and blame without resentment, If you can face the world without lies and deceit, If you can conquer tension and relax without liquor, If you can sleep without the aid of drugs, If you can do all these things, then you are the family dog.”

If you are human, I guarantee you have some problem you need to let God change. The truth is that often we don’t realize the severity of our problem. The one thing the devil does is blind us to ourselves. Instead of accepting the chinks in our armor, Satan convinces us to put on masks and pretend that everything is all right. This is called denial.

In the days of royalty in England, kings and queens would often commission artists to paint their portraits. But the artist never included their blemishes and flaws. He always made royalty look better than they appeared because they liked to live in denial of what they looked like. Cindy Crawford said, **“Even Cindy Crawford doesn’t look like Cindy Crawford without three hours of make up and hair.”**

Nobody really looks that good. They must cover it and airbrush everything. Covering up what we look like on the inside is denial. Here's a question for you, how do I know if I'm in denial?

Here are some phrases that a person in denial uses. **“I can handle this... It's not really a problem... I don't need any help... I don't need any counseling... I can quit any time... I can work it out on my own...”** But we can't handle it and we can't quit. We have a problem. Most psychologists say that denial causes poor emotional health. The truth is that we cannot put a sin or bad habits behind us, until we stop denying the problem and admit we need help.

An example in the Bible of a man who lived in denial for a long time was King David. David had a problem that is common for a lot of us; he had a problem with lust. But because David refused to accept his problem; it only grew worse. I want us to look at David's life and see three things that God used to eventually tear down David's wall of denial so he could admit he had a problem. God may use these three things to help us see our own problem of denial.

1. PERSONAL CRISIS. David's crisis began when he chose to stay behind while his army went out to battle. David, being the King should have been with his army in battle. That is what Kings did in those times. But he stayed home. Next, he sees a woman bathing. A man with morals would have been embarrassed to the point of immediately turning away and leaving that area. But not David. He took things to the next step. He has a servant bring the woman to him and as a result of their adultery, she becomes pregnant. All this stopped **if** David had realized his weakness. David had a personal crisis developing. Bathsheba became pregnant. This was not how it was planned. Bathsheba was to come to David's room and leave the next morning. He was never to see her again. This was supposed to be a one-night stand with no problems. But David created a life crisis for himself. God often uses personal crises such these, as a wake-up call to show us that we have a problem and we need to seek help.

The purpose of a personal crisis is to make us evaluate the state of our lives and begin to make some changes so that we don't go deeper into sin. The personal crisis is normally not disastrous. You are normally able to recover from it. The personal crisis is usually just a by-product of the problem. Usually, it is just enough pain to make you think.

Often personal crisis leads us to what psychologists call minimization. Where we say, "Oh, I admit I have a problem but it's really not that big of deal. I can handle it on my own." And we attempt to just conceal our problem and hide it from others. News of Bathsheba's pregnancy led David to minimization. He tried to cover his tracks. He was not ready to admit his problem. Instead he hatches a plan to cover up his sin.

In the rest of this story, David tries to cover up his sin involving many others. Joab – David's number 1 general and a fan of David is sucked into this quagmire. What David did was call Uriah, who was Bathsheba's husband, back from the battle field and he tried to get Uriah to go home to sleep with Bathsheba so that Uriah would think that Bathsheba's baby was his. But Uriah did not go sleep with Bathsheba because Uriah had comrades in battle dying.

2. CONFRONTATION FROM A FRIEND. When Uriah refused to sleep with his wife, David ordered Uriah to return to the battlefield. He gave orders to the general in the field to put Uriah on the front line and soon Uriah was killed. Once Uriah was dead, David brought Bathsheba into his palace and married her. 2 Samuel 11:27 says, ***"The thing David had done displeased the Lord."***

David was not only an adulterer, now he was a murderer. His sin was compounding itself. Sin usually must get worse before it will get better. No one in the palace or in the city of Jerusalem was privy to David's schemes except a prophet named Nathan. Nathan was a friend of David's and David had respect for Nathan as a man of God. Nathan waited nine months before he went to talk to David about his problem. Nathan enters the palace and speaks to David in a parable. He said to David.

“There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little lamb he had bought. He raised it and it grew up with him and his children. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep to prepare a meal for the traveler. Instead he stole the lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the traveler. David burned with anger and said to Nathan, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!’” (2 Sam. 12: 1-5).

And then Nathan drops the bomb and says to him, *“David, you’re the man.”* *You’re the one who did this David. You have a problem. “You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.”* (v. 9). **You’re the man David.**

When a personal crisis doesn’t work then God often uses people in our lives like he did Nathan. A friend who comes to us and tell us the truth about our problem. Psychologists call what Nathan did, “intervention.” Going to a person and attempting to stop their behavior. Galatians 6:1 says, *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”* That’s what Nathan did. And there comes a time when it takes confrontation to help a person. David reacted hard.

3. CATASTROPHE. 2 Sam. 12:15 says that *“After Nathan had gone home the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David and the baby became ill. On the seventh day the child died. David’s servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead for they thought, ‘while the child was still living, we spoke to David, but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.”* David learned - actions have consequences.

A woman walking noticed a little old man rocking on his porch. She said Hi, I couldn’t help notice how happy you look. What’s your secret? “I smoke 3 packs of cigarettes a day, he replied. I drink a case of whiskey a week, eat only fast food, and never exercise.” The woman was amazed. "How old are you?" she asked. "26, he replied.”

David was reaping the consequences of his lifestyle. Experience tells me that **some people change when they see the light. Others change only when they feel the heat.** David felt the heat. Here is a great truth. We will remain the same until the pain of remaining the same becomes greater than the pain of changing. David had sex with Bathsheba, killed Uriah, now his son had died. The pain was too much. He had to change. It was time to admit his problem.

Psalm 51 is a song of confession of sin that David wrote following the death of his child. *“Have mercy on me, O God according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion blot out my sin, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow, hide your face from my sin and blot out all my iniquity. Do not cast me from your presence or take your spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Save me from bloodguilt O God, the god who save me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.”*

David was a broken man, but no longer in denial. Once the child died, he suddenly realized all he had done. It took a catastrophe to finally get him to admit that his life was out of control and he needed God.

God often uses catastrophe in our lives to get us to see the error of our ways. When personal crisis and confrontation don't work, God usually lets sin run its course. Catastrophe is when the bottom falls out in your life and you have nowhere to turn except to God for help. Paul tells us that when we are at the end of our rope we are blessed because when there is less of us there is more of God.

Don't continue down Denial Road – it has catastrophic circumstances waiting for you. Allow God into your life by recognizing your need for Him. God is waiting patiently for each of us to give up denial.