

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 21, O What a Tangled Web We Weave: Power Poisons the Conscience

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 21, O What a Tangled Web We Weave: Power Poisons the Conscience, [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org), BeL

Dr. Chisholm's lecture explores 2 Samuel 11, focusing on David's grave sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of Uriah. **The lecture highlights** how David, despite God's covenant with him, abused his power as king. **The lecture draws parallels** between David's actions and those of Samson, illustrating a tragic fall from grace. **Ultimately, the explanation shows** how David's attempt to conceal his sins failed, incurring God's displeasure and setting the stage for divine retribution. **Power's corrupting influence** and the impossibility of hiding sin from God serve as the central themes in the text.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Chisholm, Session 21 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → 1 Samuel).



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3. Briefing Document: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 21, O What a Tangled Web We Weave: Power Poisons the Conscience

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Chisholm's lecture on 2 Samuel 11.

Briefing Document: 2 Samuel 11 - "O, What a Tangled Web We Weave, Power Poisons the Conscience"

Main Themes:

- **Abuse of Power:** The central theme is the corrupting influence of power on David, leading him to commit adultery and murder.
- **Sin and Accountability:** The lecture emphasizes that even God's chosen servants cannot hide their sins and will be held accountable. God sees all and assesses it morally.
- **Fallen Human Nature:** David's actions highlight the fundamentally flawed nature of humanity, capable of heinous crimes even after demonstrating godliness.
- **Consequences of Sin:** David's sins have profound consequences, not only for himself but also for his kingdom and family.
- **Divine Omniscience:** God sees everything that humans do.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Context:** The lecture places 2 Samuel 11 within the broader narrative of 1 & 2 Samuel. David has been experiencing success and solidifying his kingdom (2 Samuel 8-10), but this success precedes a major moral failing. God had already made an irrevocable covenant with David, promising to never set aside David and his dynasty.
- **The "Harem Reports":** Chisholm notes a recurring pattern where David's growing power is followed by accounts of him acquiring more wives (2 Samuel 3, 5). This is seen as a violation of Deuteronomic policy and a step towards resembling typical ancient Near Eastern kings. Chisholm states, "But nevertheless, he was beginning to look more like the typical ancient Near Eastern king, complete with a harem."

- **David's Initial Sin:** David remains in Jerusalem when he should have been at war. He sees Bathsheba bathing, and the narrator emphasizes her beauty. This sets in motion a chain of events driven by David's abuse of power.
- Chisholm draws a parallel between David seeing Bathsheba and Samson seeing women in Judges, suggesting a tragic trajectory for David, "And now David is the next character in the larger story to see a woman. And it's going to lead to his demise in many ways." Chisholm also compares David to Joshua and Caleb, and then to Samson.
- "David's gaze has fallen on one who was every bit his physical equal. He's met his match, as it were. And so, the question arises, will he succumb to the temptation of using the power that he has now as king to take what he desires?"
- **David's Actions:** David uses his power to summon Bathsheba, sleeps with her, and she conceives. Chisholm notes the narrator's observation that Bathsheba was "purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness" highlights the impossibility of Uriah being the father if she becomes pregnant. "Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness. So, she had just had her period, her menstrual cycle was underway."
- **Plan A (Failed):** David attempts to cover up his sin by recalling Uriah from the battle, hoping he will sleep with Bathsheba. Uriah's refusal to go home to his wife, citing the army's hardship, serves as a rebuke to David. Uriah says, "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."
- Plan A (Part 2) -- David gets Uriah drunk, hoping he will go home to sleep with his wife.
- **Plan B (Murder):** When Plan A fails, David sends Uriah back to the battlefield with a letter to Joab, ordering Uriah's death. Chisholm notes that this plan is poorly thought out.
- Chisholm notes the language David uses mirrors his descriptions of how he killed predators in 1 Samuel 17 and Shobach in 2 Samuel 10, but contrasts that with the use of the same language to describe Joab murdering Abner and the assassins murdering Ish-bosheth.

- **Joab's Complicity:** Joab carries out David's order, ensuring Uriah's death during a battle. Chisholm highlights the "collateral damage" aspect, where other soldiers die to achieve David's goal.
- **David's Response:** David attempts to console Joab. Chisholm notes that "The sword devours one as well as another" seems like David is covering for Joab. David takes Bathsheba as his wife, seemingly to cover his tracks and legitimize the pregnancy.
- **Divine Displeasure:** The chapter ends with the statement that "the thing David had done displeased the Lord." Chisholm states that the text says it "was evil in the eyes of the Lord." This sets the stage for divine judgment.
- **Theological Reflection:** Chisholm argues that the story is not merely about lust but about the abuse of power. David's actions are a violation of multiple commandments (adultery, coveting, murder, theft).
- "Power can be a breeding ground for sin. And sin, once conceived, can consume those who try to cover it up."
- "We can't hide our sin from God. He's watching, and he will hold us accountable for our behavior."

4. Study Guide: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 21, O What a Tangled Web We Weave: Power Poisons the Conscience

A Tangled Web: Exploring Power, Sin, and Consequences in 2 Samuel 11

Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you understand the key themes, characters, and literary devices in 2 Samuel 11, as discussed by Dr. Robert Chisholm. It will also help you reflect on the implications of this chapter for understanding human nature and the nature of God.

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, drawing from the lecture material.

1. Why does Chisholm describe David's story in 2 Samuel 11 as a tragedy?
2. How does the narrator's description of Bathsheba ("very beautiful") connect with earlier descriptions of David? What is the significance of this connection?
3. What is the significance of Uriah being called a "Hittite" and one of David's "mighty men"?
4. Explain the two "offline" comments that the narrator makes during the story of David and Bathsheba.
5. Describe David's "Plan A" for dealing with Bathsheba's pregnancy. Why does it fail?
6. What is particularly disturbing about David using Uriah to carry the letter that seals his own death?
7. How does David's command to Joab regarding Uriah contrast with David's actions as a warrior earlier in 1 & 2 Samuel?
8. What specific commandments does Chisholm say David violated in 2 Samuel 11?
9. According to Chisholm, why is it wrong to interpret 2 Samuel 11 as just a story about lust and sexual sin? What is a more fundamental issue at play?
10. Explain Chisholm's statement that, "Power can be a breeding ground for sin, and sin, once conceived, can consume those who try to cover it up."

Quiz Answer Key

1. Even though God's grace keeps David's kingship intact, David's actions in this chapter lead to tragic consequences for him and his family. This marks a turning point where the rest of David's story is marred by conflict, loss, and divine judgment, stemming from the abuse of his power.
2. Bathsheba is described using similar language used to describe David's physical attractiveness in 1 Samuel 16, which is a handsome man with good eyes, and a good appearance. This suggests that she is David's physical equal, emphasizing the temptation and David's potential to abuse his power.
3. Uriah's identity as a "Hittite" and one of David's "mighty men" highlights David's betrayal of a loyal and respected member of his own inner circle. He should have been protected not targeted.
4. The narrator notes Bathsheba's beauty to emphasize David's temptation. The narrator mentions that Bathsheba was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness to raise the tension and make the consequences of the situation more serious.
5. "Plan A" involves bringing Uriah home from the battle, assuming he will sleep with Bathsheba, thus leading everyone to believe he is the father. This fails because Uriah refuses to go home, demonstrating a higher sense of duty and loyalty than David himself possesses.
6. It represents a profound abuse of power and a betrayal of trust. It shows how far David is willing to go to cover up his sin, even to the point of manipulating and sacrificing an innocent and loyal soldier.
7. Previously, David struck down and killed enemies of the Lord and those who threatened him or his people. Now, he is orchestrating the murder of a loyal soldier and doing it in a way that resembles the actions of villains like Joab, the murderers of Ish-bosheth, not God.
8. David violated the seventh commandment (adultery), the tenth commandment (coveting), the sixth commandment (murder), and the eighth commandment (theft). These violations highlight the extent of David's moral corruption and his disregard for God's law.

9. While lust and sexual sin are present, the more fundamental issue is David's abuse of power. His actions are driven by a desire to maintain his position and cover up his sin, demonstrating how power can corrupt and lead to heinous acts.
10. This encapsulates the central theme of 2 Samuel 11, highlighting how unchecked power can lead to sinful actions, and how attempts to conceal those sins can lead to even more severe consequences. David's story is a cautionary tale about the dangers of power and the deceptive nature of sin.

Essay Questions

Consider the following questions and develop well-supported arguments based on the lecture material.

1. Analyze the literary techniques used in 2 Samuel 11 (e.g., narrative interruptions, character parallels, repetition) and explain how they contribute to the overall message of the chapter.
2. Compare and contrast David's character in the early chapters of 1 Samuel with his behavior in 2 Samuel 11. What factors might explain this shift in character?
3. Discuss the role of power and authority in 2 Samuel 11. How does David's abuse of power affect those around him, and what does this chapter suggest about the nature of leadership?
4. Explore the theme of accountability in 2 Samuel 11. How is David held accountable for his actions, and what does this suggest about the relationship between sin, justice, and divine judgment?
5. What are the most significant theological implications of 2 Samuel 11? How does this chapter contribute to our understanding of human nature, the nature of God, and the problem of sin?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Harem Report:** A term used by Chisholm to describe passages in 1 & 2 Samuel where the narrator interrupts the main storyline to provide information about David's growing number of wives, often indicating a potential abuse of royal power.
- **Offline Material:** Narrative interruptions in Hebrew storytelling where the narrator pauses the main storyline to provide additional information or commentary that highlights the significance of the events.
- **Deuteronomic Policy:** Refers to the guidelines in Deuteronomy for the king of Israel, including the warning against multiplying wives to prevent idolatry and the turning away from God.
- **Capital Offenses:** Crimes punishable by death under Mosaic law, such as adultery and murder, which David is guilty of committing.
- **Nachah and Mut:** Two Hebrew words, "struck down" and "died," used together in 2 Samuel 11:17 to describe Uriah's death, echoing earlier instances of justified killings by David, and also paralleling the murders of Abner and Ish-bosheth, highlighting David's descent into moral corruption.
- **Collateral Damage:** A term used to describe unintended or incidental harm to civilians or non-combatants during a military operation. Joab uses this term to justify the deaths of other soldiers during Uriah's arranged death.
- **Omniscient:** All-knowing; referring to God's ability to see and understand everything that happens, including the secret sins of individuals like David.
- **Irrevocable Covenant:** The unconditional promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7, guaranteeing that David's dynasty would endure, even if his descendants disobeyed God.
- **Power Rape:** A term some use to describe the dynamics between David and Bathsheba because of the power imbalance between them.
- **Plan A:** David's initial strategy to get Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba and cover up her pregnancy.

5. FAQs on Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 21, O What a Tangled Web We Weave: Power Poisons the Conscience, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

FAQ: 2 Samuel 11 and David's Sin

- **What is the main theme of 2 Samuel 11?**
- The central theme of 2 Samuel 11 is how power can corrupt and lead to sin. The chapter illustrates how David, a king with immense authority, abuses his power, ultimately leading to adultery and murder. It highlights the dangers of unchecked power and the tragic consequences of trying to conceal sin. The chapter is aptly subtitled "Power poisons the conscience".
- **How does David's accumulation of wives relate to his sin with Bathsheba?**
- David's growing number of wives, as detailed in earlier chapters, suggests that he was becoming more like a typical ancient Near Eastern king, complete with a harem. This violates the Deuteronomic principle that the king should not multiply wives. This gradual accumulation of power and privilege sets the stage for the abuse of power seen in the Bathsheba incident, where he feels entitled to take what he desires.
- **Why is the narrator's description of Bathsheba as "very beautiful" significant?**
- The description of Bathsheba as "very beautiful" is significant for several reasons. First, it mirrors the way David was described in 1 Samuel 16, highlighting that David's gaze has landed on one who is his physical equal. The narrator's description draws attention to the visual aspect of David's temptation. It mirrors the story of Samson in Judges, where seeing a woman leads to his demise, foreshadowing David's downfall.

- **What was David's initial plan (Plan A) to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba?**
- David's initial plan, "Plan A," was to bring Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, back from the battlefield and encourage him to sleep with his wife. The goal was for Uriah to unknowingly believe he was the father of Bathsheba's child, thus concealing David's adultery. David's first attempt was simply to give him permission to go home, with the implied suggestion to be intimate with his wife. When that did not work, his second attempt was to get him drunk, in the hopes he would lose his inhibitions and go home.
- **Why did Uriah refuse to go home and sleep with his wife?**
- Uriah's refusal to go home and sleep with his wife stemmed from his strong sense of duty and loyalty. He felt it was inappropriate to indulge in personal comforts while his fellow soldiers and the Ark of the Covenant were in the field of battle. His actions served as a rebuke to David, highlighting David's lack of similar restraint and integrity.
- **What was David's final plan (Plan B) to deal with Bathsheba's pregnancy?**
- When Plan A failed, David resorted to a more drastic and immoral solution, "Plan B". He sent a letter, carried by Uriah himself, to Joab, instructing him to place Uriah in the most dangerous part of the battle and then withdraw support, ensuring Uriah's death. After Uriah died, David married Bathsheba in an attempt to legitimize the pregnancy and conceal his sin.
- **What does the story of David and Bathsheba reveal about human nature and God?**
- The story of David and Bathsheba reveals the flawed nature of humanity, illustrating that even individuals with a "heart for God" are capable of committing heinous acts when consumed by power and greed. It reminds us that sin, once conceived, can consume those who try to cover it up. The story also reinforces the omniscience of God, who sees all and holds individuals accountable for their actions, despite outward appearances or positions of power. It reinforces the notion that we can't hide our sin from God.

- **What commandments did David break in 2 Samuel 11?**
- David violated several of the Ten Commandments in 2 Samuel 11. He broke the seventh commandment by committing adultery with Bathsheba and the tenth commandment by coveting another man's wife. In his attempts to cover up his sin, he violated the sixth commandment against murder by orchestrating Uriah's death and the eighth commandment against theft, as he took what did not belong to him.