

The Nathan Principle

In **2 Samuel 12:1-14** God gives us a principle of communicating spiritual truth. King David had clearly sinned by committing adultery, and then ordering his military leader to murder the woman's husband. But afterward, David tried to hide his sin.

Nathan the Prophet came to David and told a story. The story was about two men, one rich, one poor. The very wealthy man owned many cattle and sheep. One day when this rich man had company, he stole the one pet sheep that the poor man owned and killed it and gave it to his guest as a meal!

When David heard Nathan's story, David became extremely angry. In the Bible story David says to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man that has done this thing shall surely die! And he must replace the lamb with four lambs, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man. "

Before David heard Nathan's story, did David know that he had committed sin? [Pause and wait for answer.] Had David admitted to his sin? [Pause and wait for answer.] Right, he had not faced his sin. Normally, how would you expect a prophet of God to preach a sermon against adultery and murder? [Pause and wait for answer.] What kind of sermon did Nathan use? [Pause and wait for answer.] Right. Instead of confronting David directly, Nathan told a story.

Notice what happened. How did David respond? [Pause and wait for answer.] Yes. David rightly judged the wealthy man as being guilty and even said that the wealthy man should do what kind of replacement? [Pause and wait for answer.] and was worthy of what? [Pause and wait for answer.] Correct. Four lambs for the one and the man should die! David was feeling the story, saw the sin of the wealthy man and then made a righteous spiritual observation.

After David committed verbally to what was right, Nathan took David into the story and made a spiritual application to David, "You are that man, David." Nathan adds some details of how David had sinned against God and then, "David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.'" We see later in that story that the punishment of death (which David had told Nathan should come on the wealthy man) instead came to David's own household.

This Bible story illustrates a major distinctive of the power of storytelling. After people hear a Bible story and really feel it, they tend to be able to insightfully discuss it. From looking inside the story, they discover and verbally commit to spiritual truth about those in the story. We call those discoveries "Spiritual Observations."

After listeners share aloud what they see about the characters, the storyteller then invites the listeners to put themselves into the story, to enter into it personally. Interestingly, while the listeners had been discussing the Spiritual Observations, very often the Holy Spirit was speaking to them. He was already prompting the people to see themselves. We call these personalized truths, "Spiritual Applications."

Use of Nathan Story: Be sure when presenting this to use expression and some gestures. And where there are questions, hesitate and allow listeners to respond.



Adonai sent Nathan the prophet to denounce King David about the evil he has committed. Nathan first told a story. Then, when the King saw, through the story, the injustice so graphically, he was caught in the rhetorical trap. The story created a window to see the crime, and the window was a mirror for David. The King cringes as he hears the blistering prophetic words of retribution; words that would be painfully played out for the rest of David's earthly life.