

# Uriah: Faith of a Foreigner



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 30

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Samuel 26:5–11; 2 Samuel 11; Esther 8:17; Psalm 51; Isaiah 56:3–7; Ephesians 2:19.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NlrV).

**IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE BUYING A TRAIN TICKET.** You stand in line for a long time and worry about missing your train. Finally, you pay. You get your ticket and run to the train. You count your change on the way and discover that the ticket seller gave you way too much. What do you do? Do you stand in line again to return the money and risk missing your train? Or do you just decide that this is your lucky day and get on the train?

What you would do in this situation depends on how you understand right and wrong. Ethics<sup>1</sup> is the way we use this understanding in our everyday life. Today, the most popular type of ethics is situational ethics. This understanding of right and wrong depends on situations, and the principles (rules) can change with each situation. It often means doing the best thing for yourself in a certain situation.

This week we will study two different sets of ethics—those of King David and those of the soldier, Uriah. David's actions are terrible. But they seem even worse when we compare<sup>2</sup> them with the actions of Uriah. We do not know much about Uriah. But what we learn about him and his sad fate can teach us what it means to live out our faith instead of just talking about it.

1. ethics—a set of moral (righteous) principles or values; a list of rules helping you to know the difference between right and wrong.

2. compare—show how two or more things are the same or different.

**SUNDAY—OCTOBER 31****THE SLIPPERY SLOPE**  
(2 Samuel 11:1–15)

**Read 2 Samuel 11 and ask yourself, How could someone so honored by God fall so deep into sin? What warning should this give to all of us?**

We cannot study the story of Uriah without studying David. In the story of Uriah, we find David at his worst. The story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah shows an important change in the life and reign (rule) of David. Before this story, David is pictured as a strong person who goes from victory (overcoming) to victory. Second Samuel 11 shows the beginning of his downfall.

Some may want to use David's sins as an excuse for their own. But the writer of Samuel shows the terrible results of David's sin. And it shows how the sins of one person can influence<sup>3</sup> many lives. The first to suffer as a result of David's sin is Uriah. Next is the child born to David and Bathsheba. David loses respect and honor among his family. And the effects of his sin grow from a family problem into a national one. The sin of David starts a chain of sin that soon includes rape (2 Samuel 13:14), murder (2 Samuel 13:28, 29), and the deaths of many people in a rebellion (war) (2 Samuel 15). David repents<sup>4</sup> and gains God's mercy.<sup>5</sup> But

the author of the book of Samuel clearly points out to us that sin has serious results (2 Samuel 12:13, 14).



The chain of David's sin starts in lust and lies and ends in rape, murder, and death.

The story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah is told very carefully. The writer of the book of Samuel uses many action words (often using the verb *to send*) to show how differently David and Uriah behave. Let us study the form of the story more closely and study how it is based on the main action.

- David *sends* Joab to fight the Ammonites<sup>6</sup> (2 Samuel 11:1).
- David *asks* about and *sends* for Bathsheba (verses 3, 4).
- David *commits* (does) adultery with Bathsheba (verse 4).
- Bathsheba *sends* a message about her pregnancy (verse 5).
- David *sends* for Uriah (verse 6).
- Uriah *refuses* to sleep with Bathsheba (verse 13).
- David *sends* Uriah out with the order for his own death (verses 14, 15).

“Sending” is a very important activity in 2 Samuel 11. When we send someone around, that normally

3. influence—to affect or change someone or something.

4. repents—to feel or show you are sorry for something bad or wrong you did and that you want to do what is right.

5. mercy—kind or forgiving treatment.

6. Ammonites—people living in a neighboring country across the Jordan River east of Israel.

means we have power over that person. David is truly the most powerful person in our story. He does most of the sending. He controls the members of his group. He shapes and destroys their lives. He appears as a powerful Near Eastern king of his time. But there is one thing that David does not control: sin. David seems to control the action of the story, but sin controls his choices and his reasons for making them.

### MONDAY—NOVEMBER 1

#### NO ONE IS AN ISLAND (1 Samuel 26:5–11)

A war with the Ammonites is the background of the story of David and Uriah. Read 2 Samuel 11:1 carefully. What criticism of David does the author give?

David decides to stay home and sends his army out under the command of Joab. This decision (choice) is his first mistake. He has started to believe that as king he is more special than his men. So, he feels it is best not to put himself in danger. David has not learned that the greatest dangers are almost always from inside, not from outside. The biggest problem with power or authority is that it fools us into thinking we are somehow better than others and above the laws or rules that others must obey.

**Compare the types of leadership that David shows in the stories of 1 Samuel 26:5–11 and 2 Samuel 11.**

#### What difference do you notice?

In the stories describing how David protected Saul's life, David leads by example and asks for volunteers (those who offer help). But now, in the time of 2 Samuel 11, David is not out with his troops and leading them, depending on God for guidance and personal safety. Instead, David goes up to the roof of the palace on a hot, humid evening (perhaps to enjoy the evening breeze). The palace probably is built on the highest section of the fortress city. So, it has a commanding view of most of Jerusalem. David looks over the rooftops and sees a woman bathing. Then he sends someone to find out who the woman is. He sends for the woman, knowing that she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The Hebrew verb used to show David's command to Bathsheba is very strong. It also is used to show that something is taken by force (Genesis 14:11). David follows his desires, which overwhelm (control) him. He completely forgets what he knows about right and wrong. He does not know or think about the far-reaching results of his decision. By abusing his power as king, David will forever change the lives of Bathsheba, Uriah, an unborn child, and the course of Israel's history.

**Think about the decisions you make. Are they based mostly on careful thinking and reasoning? Or are they based on emotion and passion? Which way of thinking seems to control you? Is there a**

right balance in your life between these two choices? If not, how can you find that balance?

## TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 2

### A FOREIGNER IN ISRAEL (Ruth 1:1–16)

Throughout this chapter, Uriah is known as Uriah the Hittite. But who were the Hittites? The Hittites of Palestine were a group whose kingdom covered parts of what is now considered Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. This kingdom bordered Israel to the north. In the Old Testament, culture,<sup>7</sup> nationality, race, and religion were all linked. For this reason, the Old Testament strongly criticizes, and does not permit, intermarriage between Israel and its surrounding nations. The law given in Deuteronomy 7:3 is re-taught at each important festival (holiday) in Israel. A key to understanding the laws against intermarriage is religion. The Old Testament is full of examples of foreigners who accept the God of Israel. And the Bible treats the foreigners' acceptance of the Jewish religion positively. In the case of Uriah, acceptance comes in the form of both marriage and religion.

**Read Joshua 6:25; Ruth 1:1–16; Esther 8:17; and Isaiah 56:3–7. What are some examples in these verses of foreigners who were accepted into Israel?**

Ruth, the Moabite, left her land (Moab), people, and religion and went with her mother-in-law back to Israel. Her famous words show how important it is to understand another people and also another God: “ ‘Don’t [Do not] try to make me leave you and go back. Where you go I’ll [I will] go. Where you stay, I’ll [I will] stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God’ ” (Ruth 1:16, NIV). This acceptance includes both daughters-in-law and lying prostitutes. Remember Rahab, the prostitute who rescued the two spies? Rahab was the one who chose to believe that the God of Israel was powerful and faithful. Sometime after the fall of Jericho, Rahab marries Salmon and, along with Ruth, is included in the family history of Christ (Joshua 6:25; Matthew 1:5).



**The family tree of Jesus included ex-prostitutes, spies, adulterers, and murderers.**

7. culture—the beliefs, customs, arts, and so on, of a particular society, group, place, or time.

Uriah was not the only Hittite to serve David. First Samuel 26:6 names Ahimelech the Hittite. But Uriah became one of David's best warriors (1 Chronicles 11:41). Suppose Eliam the father of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3) was the same Eliam who was the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite (2 Samuel 23:34). Then Uriah had married into a very influential (well-known and powerful) family. His father-in-law would have been a very good warrior and the son of David's valued counselor. This could explain why Uriah had a house so close to the palace. It also may give a reason why Ahithophel later left King David to join the rebellion of Absalom (David's son). It could be that Ahithophel was angry with David for the treatment of his granddaughter, Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband, Uriah.

**How can we strengthen our connection with God by studying how Ruth, Rahab, and Uriah accepted the Jewish religion? How does Ephesians 2:19 help us understand that no matter our background we can be accepted into "the household of God" through Christ?**

### WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 3

#### WHAT IS IN A NAME? (Genesis 32:27, 28)

Names were very important in the Bible. A name could tell about the cultural history and beliefs of a person. They also pointed to the wishes the parents had for the child. Often, a change in life circumstances<sup>8</sup> or beliefs would be shown by a change of name.

**Note the new names of the following Bible characters<sup>9</sup> and give the reason given for the name change:**

**Abram (Genesis 17:5)**

**Jacob (Genesis 32:27, 28)**

**Daniel (Daniel 1:7)**

After Jacob's night of wrestling with the heavenly visitor, he experienced what may be one of the most far-reaching name changes in all Bible history. Out of a "deceiver" (Jacob) came a "may-God-strive-for" (Israel). All of Jacob's future children became known as "Israelites," or the children of Israel.

In the case of Daniel, the name change has a different purpose. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to make sure that the young exiles<sup>10</sup> knew who was in control. He also wanted to brainwash<sup>11</sup> them. Daniel had his name changed from "God is my judge" to "protect the life of the prince" (Belteshazzar). This is how Nebuchadnezzar tried to destroy Daniel's loyalty to his God.

8. circumstances—events or situations that cannot be controlled.

9. characters—people who appear in a story.

10. exiles—people who have been forced to live in a foreign country.

11. brainwash—to cause (someone) to think or believe something by using methods that make a person unable to think normally.

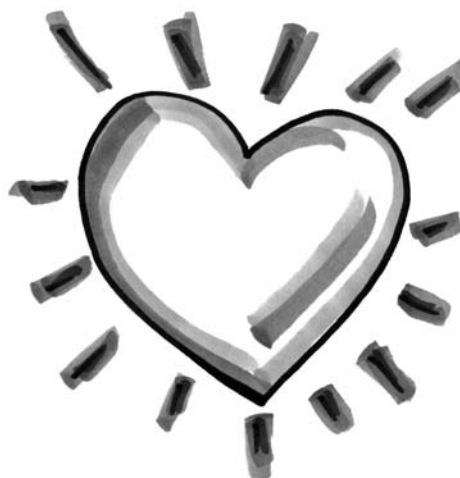


Uriah's name could be translated to mean "flame of the Lord."

The name of Bathsheba's husband is not very special in Bible history. During the time of King Hezekiah, a prophet by the name of Uriah made a prophecy<sup>12</sup> about God's judgment against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 26:20–23). It is interesting that the name of Uriah in Hebrew could be translated as "my light is the Lord" or "flame of the Lord." He may have been a Hittite by birth. But he belonged to the God of Israel by choice. Uriah's geographic background (where he was from) shows that God does not look only at the outside but knows the heart. Having family members in important church positions or great godly relatives does not give us a better standing before God. Our family history or our own personal history does not change our acceptance with God.

By dying for all people, Christ tore down all walls between all people (Galatians 3:28). The Cross proves

that we are all equal before God. Christ's death was for every person. This is because every person is of unlimited value in His eyes. Sure, God has given different groups special duties and responsibilities at different times. But that is not the same as saying some people are more important to God than others. The Cross shows that Christ died for all people.



God does not look at the outside but knows the heart.

## THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 4

### A MAN OF PRINCIPLE (2 Samuel 11:10–13)

In the book of Samuel, Bathsheba appears as a passive character.<sup>13</sup> And the Bible writer does not comment much about how involved she is in the crime. Bathsheba seems to be passive in the whole story, but she will pay a high price. Her baby son

12. prophecy—a statement that something will happen in the future.

13. passive character—passive is a term (word) used to describe someone in a story who allows things to happen, or who accepts what other people do or decide, without trying to change anything.

will die. The only time that Bathsheba speaks is when she sends a message to David telling him she is pregnant (2 Samuel 11:5). David thinks that if he can get Uriah home for even one evening, then it would appear that the baby was Uriah's. And then David's sin would stay hidden. So, David sends for Uriah, who has to make a tiring 40-mile (about 65 kilometers) trip to Jerusalem. After making some small talk, David sends Uriah home with a hinted order to go and sleep with his wife (2 Samuel 11:8). David tries to look generous by sending a gift to the home of Uriah. David then thinks that the situation is taken care of. But Uriah is a man of principle and cannot be tricked or forced into doing what is wrong. David learns the next morning that Uriah spent the night in the gate with the servants of the king. The situation is quickly slipping out of David's control. David sends for Uriah again. David is becoming upset. Uriah is making him look bad. David, who was once a man of honor, cannot seem to understand that Uriah is the one who now is acting with honor.

**What does 2 Samuel 11:10–13 tell us about why Uriah acted the way he did? What other examples can we find in the Bible of those who acted with the same kind of honor?**

Uriah's answer shows that he was a true believer. He had completely

joined himself with the God of Israel and his fellow soldiers. Uriah believed that it was wrong to use his situation for his own personal comfort or advantage (profit). The same David who once showed complete loyalty to King Saul (even though Saul was trying to kill him) cannot understand the loyalty and faithfulness of Uriah.

David then comes up with a disgusting plan. He gets Uriah drunk to try to break down his principles. This is the same plan that the two daughters of Lot used. And this led to the beginning of the Ammonites (Genesis 19:30–38). Now the Israelite army is fighting the Ammonites. But even though he is drunk, Uriah refuses to give up his principles and once again spends the night among the king's servants.

**Read Psalm 51 with the background of 2 Samuel 11. What can we learn from it about the nature of sin, of repentance,<sup>14</sup> and of God's grace?<sup>15</sup>**

## FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 5

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** "The Bible has little to say in praise of men. Little space is given to praising the good deeds of even the best men who have ever lived. This silence is not without reason. It is not without a lesson. All the good qualities [traits] that men have are the gift of God. Their good deeds are done by the grace of God

14. repentance—the act of feeling or showing you are sorry for something bad or wrong you did and that you want to do what is right.

15. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

through Christ. Because they owe all to God, the glory of what they are or do belongs to Him too. They are just tools in His hands. Because of this, it is a dangerous thing to praise or honor men. If one forgets his dependence on God and trusts his own strength, he is sure to fall. . . .

“It is impossible for us in our own strength to win the war with Satan. Whatever leads the mind to forget God or to self-glory is surely preparing the way for our downfall. The Bible teaches us not to trust human<sup>16</sup> power. Instead, it encourages trust in God’s power.

“It was the spirit of self-honor and self-glory that prepared the way for David’s fall. Flattery, temptations<sup>17</sup> of power, and comfort influenced him. Relations with surrounding nations also gave an influence<sup>18</sup> for evil. According to the customs at that time, Eastern kings were not punished for crimes they did against others. All this led to lessen David’s sense [knowledge] of how sinful sin is. Instead of depending humbly upon the power of God, David began to trust in his own wisdom and strength.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, page 177.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In your class, have each person talk about positions of power or influence. Discuss what can be done to prevent misuse (abuse) of power in these positions. How can we help someone who we know is in danger of using power or influence wrongly?
- ② Consider the geographic, economic, and cultural background of your Sabbath School class. How welcome would people from other groups or nonchurched people feel in your class? What could you do as a Sabbath School class to reach out to “foreigners”?
- ③ Uriah (who is honest, loyal, and true) gets murdered by his own king. David (who is not honest, not to be trusted, and cruel) gets the beautiful woman as a wife and lives for many more years. Discuss.
- ④ As a class, go over Psalm 51 and discuss what it teaches about forgiveness. How can we learn to accept forgiveness for ourselves when we might be guilty of sins as bad as the sins of David?

16. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

17. temptations—things that cause a strong urge or desire to have or do something, especially something that is bad, wrong, or unwise.

18. influence—the power to change or affect someone or something.