



## **Diagnosis Determines Treatment Plan**

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It was a regular Sunday morning, and my husband and I attended worship at our home church. Our senior pastor was on vacation so an associate pastor was preaching on Psalm 51, David's prayer of repentance after Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah.

My pastor described the backdrop of what led up to Nathan's confrontation with King David. He told about David's adultery with Bathsheba and how after Bathsheba became pregnant, David covered up their affair by having her husband, Uriah, put in the front lines of battle so he would be killed.

This was not the first time I felt sick after hearing David's sin described as an adulterous affair. This may surprise some of you reading this right now but David's relationship with Bathsheba was never mutual or consensual. It was not an affair. It is best described as David's lustful craving coupled with an abuse of his power. David took Bathsheba to his bed because he could. He was the king. In the same vein, after Bathsheba told him she was pregnant, he misused his military authority when he ordered Bathsheba's husband Uriah, to the front lines of battle to cover up his first sin (For the story read 2 Samuel 11 and 12).

When God's prophet Nathan confronted David, he told him a story describing a rich and powerful man who selfishly used his power to take something from someone who was helpless to stop him. David felt outraged at such injustice. When Nathan told him, "You are that man," David saw himself anew and his heart broke.

After church was over, I approached my pastor and said, "I know your sermon wasn't primarily about David and Bathsheba but do you honestly believe Bathsheba had a choice?"

Surprise engulfed his entire face. Humbly he said, "I never thought of it that way."

I went on to explain: Nathan defined David's sin as an abuse of power, not of sexual misbehavior. Bathsheba is never held accountable because she was a victim, not a willing participant or mutual adulterer. (For God's vindication of Bathsheba, see Christ's genealogy in Matthew where it says David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Vs 6).

Jesus knows that those with power are tempted to abuse that power to dominate and control other people. He saw the political leaders do it, and the religious leaders do it, and he sternly warned his disciples against this form of leadership.

He said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers over the Gentiles **lord it over them** and their high officials **exercise authority over them. Not so with you.** Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:41-46).

Biblical headship or leadership never entitles one to misuse his authority or position to get his own way — whether it is in a church, a company, a community, or in a family. These roles are given to us by God to humbly serve those individuals or groups that have been entrusted to our care, not to have our egos stroked or to bully others to get our own way.

If my seminary-trained pastor had never thought about David's sin as an abuse of power, perhaps there are some biblically trained counselors who don't understand this problem very well either. At the heart of most domestic abuse is the sinful use of power to gain control over another individual. The weapons used are physical strength, outbursts of anger and verbal threats, emotional battering and intimidation, economic control, sexual pressure or domination, and/or spiritual one-upmanship. One person in the relationship seeks to control the other, often using anger, money, and the scriptures.

Sadly, I have seen many hurting individuals and families devastated by inadequate counsel in these situations—simply because his or her counselor did not perceive the imbalance of power and control in the relationship. Instead of putting an axe to the root problem, he or she focused on making up a mutual sin list, conflict resolution, improved communication, or headship/ submission issues—usually with disastrous results.

Christian counselors must begin to "see" what's really going on, as well as learn how to "competently counsel" people in these difficult and painful relationships.

Honestly ask yourself—How might you have counseled David and Bathsheba if they had come to you for marriage counseling? How you define the problem greatly impacts the direction of counseling you take.