

## More Men Like Nathan

2 Samuel 7:1-17; 2 Samuel 12:1-1 Kings 1:5-27

**B**rett and Kate McKay own and operate a website called [theartofmanliness.com](http://theartofmanliness.com), where many different topics are explored. There you can learn how to tie a tie, grout tile, shave like your grandpa, carve a turkey or even how to give a manly handshake.

Filmmaker Jordan Crowder occasionally produces a video for them called “Gentleman on the Street,” where he goes out and asks questions of people on the streets of Hollywood. In a recent video, he asked, “What is the manliest thing you’ve ever done?” One guy said he once held the door open for a woman. Another said he stepped in front of his wife when a dog was threatening her. One man didn’t understand the question, even after it was rephrased and asked again.

So guys, what is the manliest thing you’ve ever done? On Mother’s Day we explored the topic, “More Women Like Lydia,” and we learned that we need more women who make worship and prayer a priority. We discovered that we need more women whose hearts are responsive to the Lord, and more women who are courageous.

Today we turn to the Old Testament to take a look at a “manly” man who appears in the pages of Scripture only a few times, but one who had a large impact on the life of King David. Today I point to Nathan, because when we look at him carefully, we come to the conclusion that we need more men like Nathan!

### **1 We need more men like Nathan: men who are not afraid to correct their mistakes, 2 Samuel 7:1-17**

The first verse of 2 Samuel 7 tells us that *“David was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him.”* Things were peaceful, and David had time to stop and catch his breath. Perhaps he began to think about building up his kingdom. He looked around him and realized that he had come a long, long way from when he was hiding in a cave while running from King Saul.

Nathan was there with him. Notice that the Scriptures refer to him as “Nathan the prophet.” David said to him in verse two, *“Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.”* In other words, David was living in a very

expensive house, while the ark of God was still in the tent of the Tabernacle. The contrast bothered him.

This message is about Nathan today, but we should pause here long enough to consider David's intentions. It was a good thing for him to consider that the ark of God was not being housed as well as he was. His intentions were good.

And Nathan agreed. In verse three, his response to King David was "*Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.*" That is the New International Version, which, in my opinion, waters it down a little. The KJV reads, "Go, do all that is in thine heart" which to me indicates that David had shared his entire vision with Nathan. This was a burden David had in his heart, and Nathan was a trusted friend and advisor. Since he was also a prophet, David thought it would be wise to run it by him.

Nathan agreed that David's observation was correct, so he told him, "Go ahead and do what you're thinking about," which was probably the answer David was looking for.

It sounded like good advice, but the only problem was that it wasn't what God wanted. Notice in verse four that God wasted no time to correct Nathan. That very night, when Nathan was alone, God spoke to Nathan. He had a message for David, and it was the exact opposite of what Nathan had told him the day before.

We're not going to look at the details of what God told Nathan to tell David. The gist of it is that God said He had a much bigger plan for David than a building project. God told David that his kingdom would be established forever, and it was, because it was through David that the Messiah Jesus would come.

What we focus on is that Nathan had to go back to the king the very next morning and say, "Ooops!" That couldn't have been easy. "O King, remember that little project you mentioned to me yesterday? And remember how I told you to go ahead? Ummm...turns out, I was really wrong about that!" Then he proceeded to deliver the message which had come fresh from God.

Don't you wish life sometimes had a huge eraser attached to it? Every one of us has made mistakes we wish we could fix or erase. Life doesn't have an eraser attached to it, and sadly, just admitting that we made a mistake doesn't always fix the damage that has been done.

Comedian Red Skelton once quipped, “All men make mistakes, but married men find out about them sooner.” Seriously, though, he was right that we all make mistakes. Sometimes mistakes are merely embarrassing; other times they are humiliating. John Maxwell has written, “A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them.”

You see, only when we have been man enough to admit that we have made a mistake can God’s redemptive grace be poured out on us. Author H. Norman Pell once wrote, “I praise God because he not only guides my directions but overrules my mistakes.” The truth is that He only sometimes does that, but aren’t we glad He does at least sometimes?

Sometimes those mistakes are minor, as in being mistaken about something. Sometimes they are major, and perhaps involve the lives of others. In our day, we need more men like Nathan, men who are not afraid or too proud to admit when they’ve made mistakes that need to be corrected, men who are willing to listen to God and take appropriate steps to correct the wrong.

## **2 We need more men like Nathan: men who act with courage, 2 Samuel 12:1-14**

Some time goes by. The Scripture makes it clear in 2 Samuel 11 that David was not where he was supposed to be, and he saw something he should not have seen. The sin was not in the first look—that was probably accidental. The sin was in the second look. He was tempted in a very basic way, and he surrendered to it. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, who was married to someone else, then had her husband killed. You’re familiar with the story.

But don’t think that God looked the other way. The Bible tells us that “*the thing David had done displeased the Lord*” (2 Samuel 11:27b). So one day God sent Nathan to David to confront him with what he had done. Nathan did it by telling David a story. Here is what he said:

*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 ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.*

*Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him. (2 Samuel 12:1-4)*

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to see the sin in someone else's life and totally overlook your own? That's what David did that day. The Bible says in 2 Samuel 12:5 that "*David burned with anger,*" and that is literally what the words mean. He was enraged! He assumed that the story was true, and passed judgment on the man right there: "*As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.*"

Without hesitation Nathan replied, "*You are the man!*" Now just think about that. Think of the courage it must have taken to stand before the king, who had the right to have him executed, and confront him with his sin. What gave him that courage? Nathan did not get that courage just that morning. This was the accumulated courage of a lifetime of obeying God and walking in His ways. It was the fact that Nathan knew without question that he had a message from God for David, and that he had been sent there. He was more intent on pleasing God than on pleasing David. He cared more for what God thought than what David thought, even if David *was* the king.

It takes real courage to be a man in our world. We may never have to stand before a king or a president or a governor and tell them that they had sinned, but sometimes I think it takes much more courage just to be an average guy. Sometimes it takes real courage just to be a father, or to stand up for the right, or even just to face another day of hard work.

Our world is jerking us in so many different directions, and as we near the return of Christ, the courageous man of God will have more and more pulling at him. It takes real courage to stand up in the face of a culture that says wrong is right and right is wrong. It takes real courage to be a man of God in a world where if we don't like the definition of something, we just change the definition. And it takes real courage to be a man of God in a day when there is a real battle going on between those who follow God and those who do not.

Courage is not the absence of fear; it is being afraid and doing what needs to be done anyway. It is the determination to do the right thing even if it costs you something, and even if others don't understand or agree. John Wayne was quoted

as saying that “Courage is being afraid and saddling up anyway.” We need more men like Nathan, who saddle up, even in the face of difficulty, trial, pain and illness, even in the face of a world which is trying to redefine what “right” is.

### **3 We need more men like Nathan: men who stand up for others, 1 Kings 1:5-27**

We move now to 1 Kings 1. David was old and nearing the end of his life. One of his sons, whose name was Adonijah, decided that he was going to be king instead, even though the kingdom had been promised to his brother Solomon. He gathered some men around him, and began planning his own coronation ceremony. Verses 9-10 tell us that *“he invited all his brothers, the king’s sons, and all the men of Judah who were royal officials, but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.”* He left them out on purpose.

But word gets back to Nathan, and he knew this was not right. Benaiah was one of the king’s special assistants, but he didn’t do anything about it. The special guard didn’t do anything about it. Not even Solomon did anything. We don’t even know if they had even heard about it at the time. But Nathan had, and he didn’t wait for someone else. He went to Bathsheba, who was Solomon’s mother, to tell her that Adonijah had become king, and that if she didn’t act quickly, she and Solomon would lose their lives. She was to go into David and say to him, *“My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: ‘Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne’? Why then has Adonijah become king?”* (1:13).

And that is what she did. While she was still speaking, Nathan came into the room and confirmed what she had said. David realized he had to act quickly, so he reaffirmed what he had earlier told Bathsheba, that Solomon would indeed be king. He had Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah take Solomon to a certain place and proclaim him king over Israel.

It was done, and Adonijah’s plot fell apart. And that is basically the last we hear of Nathan the prophet. But this is important because Solomon was the one from whom Jesus would descend. And it happened because Nathan stood up when everyone else was wondering what should be done. Nathan was a man of action who saw something that needed to be done, and he did it. The throne belonged to Solomon, and he stood for him during a very dangerous time. Had he not done so, the throne would have gone to Adonijah, and history would have looked very differently.

I saw a quote the other day which said, “Strong people stand up for themselves; stronger people stand up for others.” The Bible character Barnabas was a very good example of that. When Saul had become a follower of Christ after persecuting Christians for so long, Barnabas stood up for him. When John Mark wanted to rejoin Paul and Barnabas on a missionary trip after leaving them once before, Barnabas stood up for him. We need more men like that today, men who see what is right and stand up for it, men who defend others in the face of injustice, men who correctly read the times and determine that they will change history.

We need more men like Nathan, men who stand up for others when it is not popular to do so, men who realize the proper course of action to take and are quick to do it, men who don’t wait for others but who see a personal responsibility and set about to fulfill it.

Stuart Briscoe is the senior pastor of Elmbrook Church, in Brookfield, Wisconsin. When he was young and new to the working world, he was hired by a bank. One day his boss told him that if a certain man called, he should say that the boss was out. Briscoe replied, “Oh, are you planning to go somewhere?” “No, I just don’t want to speak to him, so tell him I’m out.”

So Briscoe asked, “Let me make sure I understand—do you want me to lie for you?” The boss was outraged and blew up at him. Briscoe prayed and God gave him the right words to say: “You should be happy, because if I won’t lie *for* you, isn’t it safe to assume that I won’t lie *to* you?”

We need a few more men like that in our day. And like Nathan, we need more men who are willing to correct their mistakes, men who act with courage, and men who are willing to stand up for others, even when it’s not popular.

What is the manliest thing you’ve ever done? The answers would be as varied as the men who are here today. But it might be stepping out to fully surrender your life to Jesus—because it takes a real man to admit his need for a Savior. Are you one of those?