



SERMON SERIES BY PASTOR SANDY ADAMS
SCARY FAMILIES: PART SIX
DON'T SCRATCH THE ITCH
TEXT: 2 SAMUEL 11:1-5

We're in the middle of a series of messages we've entitled, "Scary Families." And we've learned the Bible is full of scary families. In fact, there are more scary families in the Bible, than normal, healthy families. Yet here's our hope... By studying the blunders of others we can spare ourselves the same mistakes, and their scary consequences. Thus we've subtitled our series, "Taking the Fright Out Of Family Life." And as we've done each week, we'll start with a few family photos of what seem to be scary families. Most of you live in perfect families. You know nothing of a scary family, so I need to get you in the mood...

First, here's a family that's **out on a limb** together. You've got to wonder when is this limb going to snap. Second, here's **a kid between two weird-looking parents**. It's a scary situation when a child gets caught between two parents who are intent on acting strange. Third, is **the family funeral** photo. This is really scary. Grandpa dies, and we all gather around his casket, so we can smile, look happy, and say "**cheese**." And last is the photo of **a wife with a bayonet and a husband with a parrot**. Maybe he complained about her talking too much, and the bayonet is her response.

Well, this morning I'm going to talk about a scary situation that has caused many a spouse to want to pick up a bayonet and shish kabob his or her mate. I want to talk about sexual betrayal - or infidelity.

In 2 Samuel 11:1 we read, "It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.

(Itch, itch, itch, itch) Have you ever had an itch? **(Keep itching)** An uncontrollable, irritating, pestering, bothersome itch! We've all had an itch! *You were walking in the woods and rubbed up against some poison ivy... or you tried to wear the wool sweater grandma gave you... or you had an allergic reaction to the medicine... or you were putting pink insulation in the attic, and got it all over your legs...* That happened to me once, and I scratched so hard I needed stitches. *Not really! I'm just pulling your leg!* Well, David had an itch. It was a warm spring evening - the stars were out - a gentle wind rustled the draperies. The breeze lured him through the bedroom arches for a night walk on the *palace porch*. As he gazed out at the Jerusalem skyline it reminded him of his sweeping victories, his enormous popularity, even his spiritual triumphs. Suddenly he noticed through the palm branches a beautiful figure. The moonbeams acted like spotlights shining on the silhouetted figure of a gorgeous woman.

Bathsheba had gone to her rooftop to bathe. For her it was the end of a long, tiresome day. Her husband was off to battle, and in his place, it was up to her to oversee the household matters. She wasn't use to such stress. After dinner she decided to relax, unwind - pamper herself with a refreshing shower... And there she stood in the alabaster basin - completely naked - as her servant poured water down her perfectly proportioned figure.

David just happened to cast a fleeting glance in her direction. It was *unexpected access to unrivaled beauty*. Without thinking, the King's eyes *focused on her...* then *fixed on her...* finally they *feasted on her*. The few minutes David watched Bathsheba seemed like mere seconds. When she stepped from the bowl, and shook her hair dry, and disappeared into her servant's towel... David wanted more! The pleasure had passed too fast. *Who was this woman? When and how could he see her again?* **David had an itch!**

The sad and scary outcome of David's life is that *he scratched his itch!* Little did he know the horror and damage one night's failure could do to his entire life. If the servant who fetched Bathsheba and brought her to David could've seen into the future he would've considered it his patriotic duty to violate the king's request. For the sake of the nation he would've bought Bathsheba a ticket on the next caravan out of town. David's mistake was *to scratch the itch* - then *patch the scratch*. Finally, he discovered there was *just one catch* - a detail he hadn't counted on. Here's an outline: an **itch** - followed by a **scratch**, a **patch**, and a **catch**.

First, notice the **itch**. Some itches arise for the oddest reasons. They hit you out of the blue. The top of your nose itches for no reason, or there's an itch behind your ear. The source of the itch is more *mysterious* than *obvious*. And these itches can also occur in a marriage. Have you ever heard of the infamous *seven year itch*? Supposedly an unsettling discontent and boredom, can arise when a marriage closes in on its seventh anniversary. Some folks say it comes every seven years. There's *the 14 year itch* and *the 21 year itch*.

Of course, with other itches the *reason* is more apparent. *A bite, or rash, or dryness* can create an itch. And the same is true in a marriage... *A biting comment, a rash outburst, a romantic dryness* - all produce marital itches. When a spouse gets bit they become vulnerable to a tempting itch.

David's itch was the result of both the *obvious* and *mysterious*... In one sense, David's itch just happened. David wasn't seeking to sin. He wasn't out on the porch with his binoculars scanning for *babes in the buff*. He wasn't peering into Bathsheba's bathroom. He just saw her - it just happened - suddenly, surprisingly, spontaneously - his eyes just landed on a *bathing beauty*. This is how adultery usually begins.

Author Florence Littauer writes, "**No good Christian man or woman gets up in the morning, looks out the window, and says, 'My, this is a lovely day! I guess I'll go out and commit adultery.' Yet many do it anyway.**" *A chance encounter with an old friend - a late night at the office - a call to come over and fix the leaky faucet - a ride from work or church - a conversation at the water-cooler with someone who really seems to care* - you get sucked-in, subtly, without warning. It can start as innocently as a man and woman becoming prayer partners, or serving together at church. Be careful - *the itch can come at any time!* And just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're exempt. Remember, this is David we're talking about here. David is no pervert or pornographer. This was *Prince David* not *Peeping Tom*. David was a man of God - **"a man after God's own heart."** David was the sweet psalmist of Israel.

And Bathsheba was ordinarily a faithful wife. Her moment of weakness, her tiredness and vulnerability, was actually the result of her desire to please her husband, and take care of business in his absence. This was not something the world would call "ugly" - *a sex-crazed maniac and a back-alley prostitute*. This was the King of Israel, chosen of God - and the noble Bathsheba, wife of Uriah. *Yet it happens - even to Christians*. Out of the blue David gets an itch, he scratches it, *and here's what's really scary...* in an instant David wrecks two lives, and ruins two families. *And if it happened to David... it can happen to you.*

In one sense the itch just hit David, but in another sense David made some mistakes that facilitated his sin and made him more vulnerable to this itch. Three factors contributed to David's itch - [a lack of direction](#), [a lack of affection](#), and [a lack of discretion](#)...

For one, notice David's [lack of direction](#). This often contributes to a person's sexual failure. Verse 1 tells us, "[Now it came to pass in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.](#)"

Where is David suppose to be? With his men in the heat of battle. After being cooped up inside the house all winter every king needs a war or two to get the blood flowing again. But instead of combat David is sipping lemonade on his porch.

Before we condemn David for laziness realize his rationale... He'd been running from Saul for 20 years. And as if that wasn't taxing enough, once he gained the throne he won victories over Israel's enemies, shored up her borders, consolidated the kingdom, brought the Ark to Jerusalem. *David has been a busy man*. God even promised him a house - or dynasty of successors - to reign over Israel after his death! David has reached a milestone. Seemingly, his struggles are over. He's basking in the vindication of God's blessing. If anyone deserved some R&R it was Dave. The king is on "*spring break*."

Author FB Meyer once warned us, "[Let us beware of our light, unguarded hours. Moments of leisure are more to be dreaded than those of strenuous toil.](#)" While the bow is bent, and the game is on the line - there's no time for distraction. In the intensity of his trials David remained focused on obedience. Whereas, it was his prosperity that set David up for failure.

David was a man in midlife. Career-wise he was a success. But now he's bored and idle. There are few challenges left and his *success* left him *unsatisfied*. Such a man is vulnerable to sexual temptation. These are the conditions that can start an itch.

Its ironic how both *career frustration* and *career fulfillment* set a man up for the same temptation. *One man* turns to sex to drown out his failures and bolster his battered self-worth... *The other man* turns to sex when he finds out that material success is hollow and empty and he reaches for new thrills... The devil attacks from both angles. And when a man loses his focus - his family life can get scary. Boredom sets a man up for *temptation*. It's been said, "[The devil tempts all men; but idle men tempt the devil.](#)" Yet not only did David's [lack of direction](#) create a scary situation - notice also his [lack of affection](#). He neglected his relationship with God.

The Psalms tell us that ordinarily David spent time with God in the evenings - *while lying on his bed*. In Psalm 63:6 David wrote, "[When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.](#)"

David would've never bedded Bathsheba if he'd gone to bed meditating on the Lord. Beware when you become lethargic in your relationship with God. An absence of *spiritual fervor* sets a man up for *sexual failure*. David forgot the spirit of man is a rechargeable battery. *Yesterday's victories* don't guarantee *today's triumph*. The Lord is like a gas station - we need to drop-in for frequent fill-ups!

Notice too, David had strayed from the Lord in other areas of life. When Saul took back his daughter Michal, and robbed David of his wife, David married Abigail. And he married other wives - five more to be exact. Typical of oriental kings, David built quite a harem. Even though David's womanizing may've been socially acceptable, it sure wasn't pleasing to the Lord. He compromised the clear command of Deuteronomy 17:17. The Lord Himself said, "*Neither shall (the king) multiply wives for himself lest his heart turn away.*"

Here's my point, the loosening of David's standards in one area of his life, made it easier to compromise in other areas. One author puts it this way, "*David's concessions fostered in him a habit of sensual indulgence, which predisposed him to the evil solicitation of that evening hour.*" *It can happen to us...* At first glance you may not see the correlation between *lying to your boss* and *lying to your spouse...* or *cheating on your income tax* and *cheating on your mate...* But the association is there and it's real. *Little compromises lead to big compromises.* *Lying to associates at work* is good practice for *lying to your family at home*. Integrity needs to permeate our lives – not just get applied whenever its convenient.

I have no doubt, David's sin with Bathsheba began years earlier when he figured it was easier to *add a new wife* than to make life work with the one he had. Laws today don't allow people the luxury of a literal harem, but many people maintain a *harem-mentality*. They believe *it's easier to just find a new spouse than make happiness happen with the one they got!*

Family counselor, Dr. Norman Lobenz, puts it in the positive. "*There is no better safeguard against infidelity than a vital, interesting marriage.*" In sports, as well as in marriage, *the best defense is always a good offense*. To protect your family against infidelity work hard and long at making your marriage a great one.

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "*The grass always looks greener on the other side...*" But in addition, you need to remember, "*where the grass looks greener, the water bills are higher.*" Often, rather than us till the garden of our marriage - plant, and hoe, and weed, and wait for the harvest - we neglect our garden and wonder why there's no fruit. In marriage, we'd rather go to the supermarket and pick something off the shelf, *ready to eat* - than sow the seed and work the soil of our relationship. It's been said, "*an affair is nothing but love for the lazy.*"

What set David up for temptation? Certainly, it was a *lack of direction* and a *lack of affection* – but it was also a *lack of discretion*. He failed to control his thought life. It's been said, "*Promiscuity begins in the head long before it ends in the bed.*" It wasn't the *look* that brought David down, but what *took* place afterwards in his mind - the lingering lust - the rationalizations and justifications. Eugene Peterson writes a truth, "*There is nothing wrong with happening to see a beautiful woman bathing. Nothing wrong with recognizing her God-given physical attraction. Nothing wrong with an involuntary rapid pulse beat, a surge of red-blooded manhood, an inner whisper, "Wow!" But now the struggle begins, the struggle with his fantasies, flesh, faith, and his future.*" I don't know the exact thoughts that went through David's mind, but they sure weren't pleasing to God. David didn't think about his responsibilities to his family - or his obligation to Bathsheba's husband - or the cunning of Satan - or his devotion to God - or his example to the nation - *all he thought about was David*. His mind swirled with wild rationalizations...

"All I want is see her up-close. We'll chit-chat over a cup of coffee. She's probably lonely. We can pray together... She needs a friend... And I just happened to be on the porch, and just happened to look her direction, and just happened to see her - it must be God's will we get to know each other." Hey, [there is no end to what the mind will think when the heart is evil.](#)

David became proud. He pretended to be invincible. He was self-confident not God-confident. David forgot the truth about God - about life - about himself. He ceased being honest with God, himself, and others. Rather than walk humbly with God, David walked right past the Holy Spirit's conviction... he blew through his conscience's red light... he ignored the stop signs in Scripture... He's about to stumble into a scary situation.

A London Medical Journal, called "[Pulse](#)," once reported on a man who underwent electrical shock treatments to cure himself of adultery. For six days he sat in a dark room watching alternating photographs of his wife and his mistress flash up on the screen. When the psychiatrists showed him pictures of his mistress a 70 volt zap stung him... When his wife's photo popped up, a recording of how he was hurting her and harming their marriage played repeatedly... Well, electric shock might help, but I think the surer cure for infidelity is to recognize it's scary, frightful dangers - then set up boundaries to protect yourself.

Once, a married man worked in an office full of beautiful women. As a warning he carried a nail in his pocket. When asked "[why?](#)" He replied, "[I've learned a lot from this nail. Its head keeps it from going to far.](#)" David didn't need electrical shock treatments, *he needed discretion.* He'd failed to set boundaries and maintain buffers in his relationships with other women.

I believe its vitally important that we keep a healthy emotional distance in our relationships with members of the opposite sex... *A clear cushion is needed.* If you're a woman you can't be best friends with a man who's not your husband - and if you're a man you can't be best friends with a woman who's not your wife. On the job, in the neighborhood, at the church - if we're getting too transparent, too intimate with a person of the opposite sex who's not our spouse it should scare us. We're headed for serious trouble.

It's called [treasure sharing](#). Jesus said, "[Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.](#)" When I share my treasure - my laughter, and interests, and dreams - with another person eventually they'll have my heart. Your heart follows your treasure. That's why we should always reserve [treasure sharing](#) for our spouse.

Anytime you interact with members of the opposite sex avoid *isolated locations, extended hours, sexual innuendo, physical contact that can be misinterpreted.* Here's the rule: "[time plus opportunity equals trouble.](#)" If there's time be sure there's no opportunity. And if there's opportunity make sure there's no time. Remember, *little concessions lead to greater compromises...* David lacked [direction](#), [affection](#), and [discretion](#) - and tragically he scratched the itch.

Even though David had an [itch](#), Bathsheba certainly intensified it, and helped him [scratch](#). David was not the only one who lacked discretion in this story. *What is this gal doing taking a bath in full view of the king's palace?* You got to believe she wanted attention. Perhaps her marriage had grown stale and she was looking for a way to spice up her life. Uriah was a soldier - more a man of action, than emotion. David on the other hand was a poet, a musician, a romantic.

In his early years David was the *Hebrew heartthrob*. When he returned from battle, women danced in the streets and sung his praises. Bathsheba could've been one of his earlier admirers and carried a secret crush. It takes more than an *idle man* to get sucked into the sinkhole of adultery, it also takes a *willing woman*.

And Bathsheba knew how to get a man's attention. A little *show of skin* is usually enough to trap a *wandering heart*. Bathsheba knew men are aroused visually, and her moonlight baths baited the hook. Ladies, please remember modesty is still a virtue. A short skirt, or a low neckline sends a message... Dress *mod* if you like, but always dress *modest*. Ladies, be careful you don't help scratch a man's itch.

Dr. Robert LaMotte, is a neurobiologist at Yale University, and the world's foremost authority on itching and scratching. His research is interesting... LaMotte says the skin has different types of nerve fibers called *nociceptors*. Some of these nerves transmit **pain sensations** - others transmit **itch sensations**. And the two sensations are quite different. An *itch* spawns a desire to scratch. *Pain* evokes a desire to avoid scratching - you don't want to touch it...

But if the *itch fibers* and *pain fibers* are stimulated simultaneously the sensation of pain always drowns out an itch. That's why we're inclined to scratch an itch. The scratch stimulates a pain that blocks out the itch. The problem of course with poison ivy is when you scratch, the itch spreads - but if you put a hot blow dryer on it to create a slight burn you end the itch without it spreading. *The pain drowns out the itch*. LaMotte's research shows us that when you scratch an itch - although it might deaden the itch for a time - all you've really done is substituted a pain for an itch.

And this is what made David's actions so scary... When he took Bathsheba to bed – though David didn't realize it at the time - he wasn't just scratching an itch, he was substituting a pain for an itch. What was suppose to be a one night stand - a *fleeting fling* - became a *frightening and fatal attraction*.

It wasn't as easy as David thought it would be - *it never is*. Several weeks later Bathsheba sends word she's pregnant. Suddenly, the situation gets scary. David's *one night fling* is looking like *a lifetime thing*.

The official penalty in Israel for adultery was severe. It was *death by stoning*. Even though David was king he didn't know if he could survive the scrutiny. When the news of his sin leaks out, people will hold him accountable? *So David decides to cover it all up*. *Patch* the *scratch* becomes his strategy.

Two little boys were talking after Sunday School. One said to the other, "*We learned the Ten Commandments today, but I'm really confused about the seventh, 'Thou shalt not commit agriculture.'*" His buddy answered him, "*Oh, that's easy. It means you're not suppose to plough in another man's field.*" Though the boys got their terms confused, their answers still worked - for both *agriculture* and *adultery*. David plowed in another man's field and now he has to manipulate the other man to cover his tracks.

He brings Uriah home from the front lines. A little unexpected R&R. David assumes Uriah will sleep with his wife – think the baby is his - and the whole affair will stay David and Bathsheba's "*little secret*." But Uriah doesn't cooperate. He's too noble to sleep with his wife while his

men are risking their lives in battle. David even gets him drunk. Maybe a little wine will *loosen his ole libido*. Again Uriah refuses to spend the night at home.

Finally David concocts a scheme to snuff out Uriah. He sends a letter to General Joab to put Uriah in front of the enemies' heaviest fortifications. When the battle heats up, Joab should withdraw his cover, and convert Uriah into a sitting duck... *Uriah dies in battle*. And David now adds murder to his adultery.

In the story of David and Bathsheba we find a grand cover-up by a once godly man. The US had its *Watergate* - ancient Israel had its *Bathsheba-gate*. David tried to patch a problem – but instead he saw that problem grow and escalate. Always remember a vital truth, "[One unconfessed sin leads to another.](#)" As the great preacher, Alexander MacLaren, once put it, "[The temptation once yielded to, gains power. The crack in the embankment which lets a drop or two ooze through is soon a hole which lets in a flood.](#)"

Covering up sin is like hiding a puppy under your overcoat. It eventually finds a way to wiggle out... In Luke 12:2 Jesus told us, "[For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.](#)" I use to think this kind of scrutiny was reserved for heaven, but today your embarrassing stuff might just show up on the internet... *be careful!*

Several years ago I read of a man named Michael Harris who robbed a Nation's Bank in Washington DC. He stuffed the bag of loot into his pants, and made his get-away on foot. But he was easily spotted when the chemical dye pack the teller placed in the bag exploded and smoke began pouring out of his pants. Police followed the smoke into a back alley where they found Harris trying to get the bag out of his pants. Well, I don't care what it is that your trying to hide. One day its all going to explode, and you'll be found out. You see, there was one **catch** to David's *patch*.

Look at the last sentence of 2 Samuel 11:27, "[But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.](#)" This was the one *catch*. God cared about David, and was upset over David's sin and cover-up. God saw to it that David was miserable for the year he kept his sin a secret. Psalms 32, 38, and 51 describe the *mental depression* and *physical illness* that resulted from the unconfessed sin in David's life. Listen to David's awful recollections, "[When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.](#)" Guilt grinds a man down. On the outside David was business as usual, but inwardly he was in turmoil. Finally, the Prophet Nathan was sent by God to confront King David. Nathan told a parable that illustrated the king's sin... And then the prophet pointed his boney finger in David's face, and he uttered ominous, scary words. He said, "[You are the man!](#)"

Once uncovered, David confessed his sin and God was merciful to him. God forgave his sin, *but here's the scary realization - He didn't remove its consequences*. In 2 Samuel 12:9 God tells David, "[You have killed Uriah..with the sword and you have taken his wife to be your wife... now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house.](#)" Violence will ravage David's family.

We learn from 2 Samuel that because of his sin, David lost the respect of his family - especially his kids. Absalom and Adonijah both launched rebellions against their father. Though David *loved* his sons deeply, his sin spoiled his opportunity to *lead* them. After his adultery with Bathsheba, and its cover-up, David's family turned into [a scary family](#). It was riddled with death, and hatred, and incest, and violence, and betrayal, and deceit - the *royal family was a royal bust*.

I wonder about the pain David could've spared himself and others if he'd just gone to battle... Or if he'd opened his Bible rather than take a walk on the porch... Or if after seeing Bathsheba in the moonlight he had steadied his emotions - gotten a grip on himself - long enough to ponder the consequences of his actions. Even after the deed was done I wonder if the outcome would've been different if David had *confessed* his sins rather than *concealed* his sins. A careful study of David's life reveals it was the cover-up that sowed the seeds of rebellion in the heart of his sons - and caused the long-term consequences from which his family and the nation never recovered.

Husband, is a few hours of escape into sensual pleasure really worth a lifetime of pain - and the possible destruction of your innocent family? Wife, don't stop trying to communicate with your husband and work on your differences. Take heart! Be careful! Lest *in your despair* you do something you'll regret for the rest of your life and for all eternity!

Men and women, when you get that itch... *don't scratch it!* And if you've scratched it... *don't patch it!* God has the power to help us overcome sexual temptation... He also has the power to heal families and marriages that have been torn and fractured by sexual sin... "With God all things are possible!"

Here's how to take the fright out of family life... Humble your heart, and lean on the Holy Spirit. **An itch doesn't mean you have to scratch!** Get your *direction* in line with God's will... Turn your *affection* toward God and your spouse... Then use good *discretion* as you interact with others... You take the fright out of family life by making purity a priority!