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## Marvelous Grace

### His Family Tree, Part 3

*Matthew 1*

### Discussion Guide

#### **Main Idea:**

The names in this genealogy are names of people that are often well-known for their sin. Many of them were very wicked and their deeds were chronicled for all to read about in the Bible. Some of them were very obstinate against God their whole lives, but others also bring us examples of what it looks like to confess sin and be forgiven. David and Bathsheba are two of the people referred to in this genealogy that leads to Jesus and their lives included a huge turning point when it came to their sin and repentance. Their lives were dripping with God's grace. They witnessed this grace in their own lives, but eventually it would be shown to all mankind even more fully by the Son of God becoming flesh and being born into their family line.

#### **Discussion Points:**

The idea of always looking for “greener grass” can be exhausting. We have difficulty being content with what we have and we look for something better. The problem is, this mindset fosters and tries to justify idolatry. Prioritizing other things before God is unhealthy and sinful. It is poisonous and will trap us in a downward spiral away from God.

- What are some of the things that our culture is constantly looking to upgrade in?
- Do you ever find yourself chasing after those things?
- How can you tell when you are crossing the line from innocent desires to idolatry?
- How do you guard yourself from becoming an idolater?

In Matthew 1:6, the genealogy line takes an interesting and unexpected turn by mentioning the wife of Uriah.

- Why do you think it is important that the genealogy does not simply skip from Jesse to David to Solomon?
- Why is it important that the record mentions Uriah at all?
- Do you think Matthew is including this detailed description to expose the sin, God's grace, or both?

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

David's fall from complete faithfulness into sin with Bathsheba did not happen in an instant. Over many years, he began to slowly fall into temptation and complacency in his relationships.

- Are there dangerous areas in your life that you may be dismissing?
- Are you guarding yourself from the pitfalls of sin in every area of your life?

David and Bathsheba repented of their sin and lived by faith in God. Their lives were dramatically changed because of their confession and desire to follow God with their whole lives. This testimony became a great teaching platform for them in their lives especially for their son Solomon.

- What kind of impact did David and Bathsheba have on Solomon's perspective of God?
- Was Solomon affected by the testimony of redemption and grace in the lives of his parents?
- Would Solomon be able to understand God's grace sufficiently if he did not know the full story about his parents and their sin?

Some events in the Bible seem too gruesome or too inappropriate for children to comprehend or need to hear, so some people might shy away from telling the story at all. The story of David and Bathsheba would fit into this category where Christians can tend to be ashamed of what happened to such characters that so many people respect and admire.

- Why is it important to not shy away from anything that the Bible teaches?
- Can God's grace be effectively taught without showing the shortcomings of men?

### **Gospel Connection:**

In looking at the genealogy Matthew presents at the beginning of his gospel account, it might seem shocking that he includes so many names of scandal. Sinners are all throughout the family line that led to Jesus. Sin touches everyone. It might seem at first that it might be more honorable to paint a different picture of Jesus' lineage where the sin was disguised or, at least, not mentioned so much, but Matthew included it anyway. In truth, Matthew found the need to show reality. He was presenting the good news about Jesus who brought God's grace to mankind. He came to save sinners and give them new, full life. He came to redeem those who had fallen into evil and rescue them to himself. Jesus brought grace to those who were undeserving. Our testimony should also include our shortcomings. The Bible teaches that we must confess our sins to be forgiven. When we do so, God proves himself to be faithful and will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us. There is no place for us to have pride because we have nothing to offer. We are completely corrupt and useless without God's grace and Jesus came to die for us so that we might receive such grace that will give us fellowship and life with God forever.

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

### **Practical Implications:**

- Think:** What does Matthew's reminder of the sins of David and Bathsheba teach about grace?
- Pray:** Thank God for His grace that He has shown to you through Jesus. Be sure to confess your sins and ask Him for forgiveness. Ask him to help strengthen you so you can follow Him.
- Do:** Read David's song of confession in Psalm 51 and repent from anything that is currently entangling you.

# Marvelous Grace

## His Family Tree, Part 3

### *Matthew 1*

J. Allen Petersen writes in his book, *The Myth of the Greener Grass*, these prophetic words – a book, by the way, that was published more than 30 years ago – A call for fidelity is like a solitary voice crying in today’s wilderness. What was once labeled adultery and carried a stigma of guilt and embarrassment, is now called an affair – a rather nice sounding, almost inviting word, wrapped in mystery, fascination and excitement. It is now called a relationship, not sin. What was once behind the scenes, a secret closely guarded, is now in the headlines – it is now the theme for an entire movie or best-selling novel; infidelity has now become as common as a cold.<sup>1</sup>

The truth is, infidelity is idolatry; it is placing a personal desire for someone over and above obedience to the word of God. An idol is the pursuit of something in life that outruns the priority of placing Christ first.

You don’t have to look very long or too deeply into your family tree before you find some ancestors who chased after idols instead of chasing after Christ.

And the harder truth is, we don’t have to look at our own lives for very long before we discover where we’re most likely going to be looking over the fence of God’s clear boundaries – pursuing idols in the myth of Greener Grass.

That greener grass might be the alluring invitation to pursue the idols of personal comfort or money or career or self-interests or something bigger and better and newer and faster and shinier. But the myth ultimately turns into reality, doesn’t it?

What you discover instead of greener grass is the tangle of weeds and poisonous vines that harm and hurt and crush and cripple the strongest Christian among us.

There are warnings in the family tree of Jesus Christ, embedded in the biographies of men and women who bit the bait. They jumped the fence, so to speak, of God’s word and found out for themselves the myth of that greener grass.

Let’s go back to that first chapter in Matthew’s Gospel once more.

While you’re turning, I recalled in this study how a few years ago, one of my sons was clearing brush and debris from the back end of our yard, near a field. We had no idea that intertwined in that brush was poison ivy. The next day, we left for a family vacation, but 2 days into it, his hands and arms were swollen and itching and he was so miserable that we cut the vacation short and got back to some serious medicine.

Poisonous weeds that can harm your heart and mind and body and spirit are subtly hiding in what looks like inviting, green grass.

In our study today, what I want to focus our attention on the lives of two people who jumped the fence of fidelity and landed in a pile of trouble.

But more importantly, what I want to do today is uncover the work of grace – something that this genealogy is dripping with – grace that emerged in the lives of two repentant people. For Israel, this event is one of the darkest stains in their history, but for Jesus, it happens to be one of the greatest opportunities to show us why He was born in a manger, 2,000 years ago.

If you have your Bibles open, you’ll notice that Matthew doesn’t just mention a couple of names, he opens Pandora’s memory box of shame.

Let’s drop in at *verse 6. Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. 7. Solomon was the father of Rehoboam . . .*

If you're writing out the genealogy of Jesus, why would you want to remind us? Why not clean up the muddy parts and polish the halo of David? We would write it like this in verse 6: "Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon – next verse – Solomon was the father of Rehoboam."

Why the need to insert this rather unusual commentary into a legal document of lineage?

I read of a wealthy socialite who hired a well-known author, asking him to help her research her genealogy and then publish her family history. As he ploughed into the research, he discovered that one of her distant relatives had been convicted of murder and was actually put to death in the electric chair at the famous Sing-Sing prison.

He came to her and said, "Look, I'm an honest author, I have to include this man in your genealogy." She begged him to leave the man out of her family tree. He refused to be persuaded.

Finally, she said, "Look, *if* you include what happened to him, at least write it in such a way that people won't exactly know he died in the electric chair in Sing-Sing Prison." And the author agreed.

When his draft was ready for print, this woman rushed to the page where he wrote of her ancestor – and following the entry of his name, it read, "At one point in his captivating life, he occupied the chair of applied electricity in one of America's well-known institutions. He was so attached to his position that he died in the harness." That's how you do it.

Shouldn't Matthew be cleaning up the embarrassing parts in Israel's historical line of the Messiah?

You get to this story and you want to tell Matthew to pipe down. "Keep that part of the story under wraps." And it's like God says, "Matthew, stop right there in going from father to son – right there – and add this editorial comment that will forever remind Israel – and us – of David's infidelity. Don't just skip over it."

No. God isn't interested in polishing halos; He isn't interested in putting people on pedestals. He is interested here, at the very outset, in pressing the fact that Jesus had come to die for sinners.

Go back and take another look at the verse; it's like God is bound and determined to reveal it – ***And to David was born Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.***

Let's get this elephant in the room out in the open. Why? Because God winks at sin? Absolutely not! In fact, His son is going to die in judgment for that sin and every other sin.

Here's the point: the genealogy of Jesus is declaring the good news of the Gospel. Jesus isn't just a King, He is the King of grace. Jesus was born to put a face on the doctrine of saving, redeeming grace.

So the Spirit of God through Matthew evidently wants this narrative recalled to the memory of those searching through the line of Jesus, the Messiah.

It takes us back to the Old Testament account in the Books of the Kings.

I only have time to review it, but like so many kings after him, David finally bit the bait of the myth of greener grass. The truth is, David had been nibbling around it for decades.

There's an ancient command in Deuteronomy chapter 17, specifically given by God to men who would become kings; God commanded that they were not to multiply horses – that represented the idols of military power; they were not to multiply silver and gold – they were the idols of financial power; and they were not to multiply wives – they were the idols of sexual power.

David passed the first two tests with flying colors – he didn't fall into the trap of depending upon his military and he didn't try to buy up Fort Knox.

But this third bait grabbed him by the heart. For the past 20 years he has been marginalizing sexual sin; he thinks he has kept it in a box somewhere manageable – someplace safe.

He doesn't think he is allergic to poison ivy and he allows the early vines to begin wrapping around his feet.

Twenty years before he ever meets Bathsheba and completely skips over the rituals of marriage, he has been tampering with the God-ordained monogamous relationship within marriage.

First, he had married Michal, the daughter of King Saul. She'd be given away by Saul, but later on David will get her back. He marries Abigail, then Ahinoam, then, when he moves to Hebron, he adds four more wives.

And when he finally begins his official reign in the capital city of Jerusalem, he will add even more wives – but then over time he will forget about making any kind of marital commitment at all and just add concubines to his growing harem. This is what kings did. But this is not what God desired.

For 20 years David has been pursuing the myth of greener grass and it will finally end in lust, abuse of power, and a conspiracy to murder.

This isn't just David's problem; this genealogy is a warning for us all. In fact, in his commentary on David's sin with Bathsheba, Chuck Swindoll spells out the warning as he writes that lust never gives up. It never runs out of ideas. Bolt your front door and it will rattle the back windows; it will crawl into the living room through the television screen; it will wink at you from a magazine in the family room. You are never completely safe.

One of the reasons why the forbidden pastures of what seems to be greener grass are so attractive to us – so basic to our fallen nature – is that we listen to the commercials and ignore the consequences. Just give us the commercials!

And while we're at it, let's rename everything forbidden sexually to make it sound more appealing. Let's call it an alternative lifestyle; let's call it a rite of passage; a first love. Let's call it "permissible" because it was "consensual."

In fact, let's tear the word "safe" out of the dictionary and attach it to pre-marital and extra-marital sexual activity so a generation of people might actually buy into the myth that greener grass is actually safe.

And keep the commercials and the movie themes and the music coming lest anyone stop to consider the consequences.

But there are consequences. Thirteen people in America are dying every day from just one common sexually transmitted disease.<sup>ii</sup> Thirteen people a day!

To put that into perspective, if you're old enough to remember SARS and the panic around 15 years ago created by that virus, it was finally brought under control. But then a new strain of SARS emerged causing kidney failure.

It was front page news every day; the United Nations was involved, world health organizations were collaborating, and people were wearing masks in airports and shopping malls.

It was indeed life-threatening and it was considered a global crisis. And before treatment was developed – it would take around 2 years – the death toll reached 50 people.<sup>iii</sup>

I'm not minimizing their deaths, I'm just pointing out that from one sexually transmitted disease alone – 50 people died this past week.

In fact, this past year, more than 100 million people were diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease.<sup>iv</sup>

One author estimated that someone on the planet is diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease every 45 seconds.

Evidently, it isn't "safe" after all. Beloved, sin is never safe. Spiritually – or according to God's built in warning system – physically.

Of the 110 million people now infected – many of them, incurably – many of them terminally – 55 million of them, are between the ages of 15 and 19.<sup>v</sup>

And you never hear about them. Why? Because our world doesn't want to discourage anybody's sinful pursuits, even if they are rushing into a meadow filled with poisonous

weeds. Instead of building fences around it, our culture and our sinful nature build bridges to it.

Well, David has been pulling that fence away for 20 years. And now as a 50 year old man he spots Bathsheba from his palace rooftop. Even though he is soon informed that she is a married woman – in fact, married to one of his mighty men who’d served with him going all the way back to the days of running from King Saul and living in a cave – never mind; David sends for her. And in the very briefest of terms, they both commit adultery and then he sends her home as if nothing had ever happened.

There aren’t many people on the planet who are unaware of David and Bathsheba. However, what I want to do is take you backstage into what becomes one of the most wonderful testimonies of the gospel of grace.

The good news is that David confesses his adultery and conspiracy to murder Bathsheba’s husband Uriah. He confesses with deep and genuine repentance to God.

Psalm 51 records his agonizing and authentic confession and repentance before the Lord. And we’re given ample evidence that Bathsheba repented as well. Instead of their marital relationship becoming strained by guilt, they conceive again and Bathsheba ends up delivering the heir to the throne of David. And Bathsheba effectively participates in the Davidic line and joins the family tree of the Messiah.

In **2 Samuel 12** we’re told that Bathsheba gave birth to that son, whom David named Solomon.

Solomon actually had several names and, in the days of the Old Testament more so than today, names were highly significant.

Many parents name a child a particular name they hope and pray will become a name their child grows up to emulate.

David named him *Solomon* – in the family of the Hebrew word, Shalom, meaning *peace*. David was hoping that Solomon would rule a kingdom different from his; a kingdom without war and with years of peace instead.

The Lord even chimes in and gives Solomon a name. According to **verses 24 and 25, Now the LORD loved him and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named Him Jedidiah for the LORD’s sake.** Jedidiah means *loved by the LORD*.

And Nathan delivers this prophetic middle name; in fact, many Old Testament scholars believe that Nathan, this wise and courageous prophet, will become Solomon’s tutor.<sup>vi</sup>

But can you imagine growing up and hearing that your middle name had been given by God with a special meaning? You think, “Man, I wish I had a special middle name like that!”

A couple of weeks ago, my 4-year-old grandson and I were talking about the significance of his middle name – the name of one of the martyrs of the early reformation.

He asked me what my middle name was, and I told him – Duane. He repeated it, “Duane” and then he started laughing at the sound of it; he laughed and laughed, until I locked him in the garage. Just kidding.

My mother gave me that middle name; she had her reasons – I don’t know what they were – but I do know that Duane started with the letter D to go with my other brothers’ middle names Timothy Dean and Jonathan Dale and now Stephen Duane.

That D was a special letter. In fact, it was prophetic; it became my favorite grade in school. I saw a lot of the letter D!

You’d think – “Man, if I only had that kind of word from God; that kind of prophetic attention – a special name from God – I’d have much fewer anxious feelings and discouraging times and doubts.” Really?

As believers, we’ve been given many special names from God like, saint, son, child, bride, ambassador, friend, Christian; how good is that?

Solomon had yet another name that appears in the Book of Proverbs: it’s the name Lemuel. The famous **Proverbs chapter 31** chapter begins with the words, ***This is what King Lemuel’s mother taught him. Lemuel*** simply means, ***“Unto God.”***

I would agree with Old Testament scholars who believe Lemuel was a name of dedication, used by Solomon's own mother. This was her name for him; a nickname, so to speak, that she used even into Solomon's maturing years.

This was the profound testimony that Bathsheba had dedicated Solomon unto God and she didn't want Solomon to forget it. She had indeed repented and was herself following after God.

The life that she had been in control of had only led to disaster and grief and sin and guilt. But God had forgiven her and, more than anything, this changed woman wanted Solomon to never forget that the only life worth living was a life dedicated *unto God*.

And what was Solomon's attitude toward her? Nothing but deepening respect.

We have no written testimony of Bathsheba – in fact, she disappears 25 years after the birth of Solomon and then reemerges when he becomes king. And you are left wondering, “what ever happened to Bathsheba during all those years?”

And if you're tempted to think, “Who cares? And for good reason. This stain from the past life of David is worth forgetting.” Well, think again.

Let me allow Solomon to write her testimony. Here are Solomon's words:

***Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. (Proverbs 1:8-9)***

Imagine the depth of character behind that warning from his mother, Bathsheba.

One paraphrase records Solomon writing in chapter 6 of the Book of Proverbs: “Friend, follow your father's good advice; don't wander off from your mother's teachings. Wrap yourself in them from head to foot; wear them like a scarf around your neck. Wherever you walk, they'll guide you; whenever you rest, they'll guard you; when you wake up, they'll tell you what's next. For sound advice is a beacon, good

teaching is a light, moral discipline is [the path to] life.”

Take it from your father . . . listen to your mother.

Bathsheba is a changed woman; mature, wise, and worth listening to.

In fact, imagine the truth that Solomon will write his description of a woman of virtue in Proverbs 31, as he opens with that incredible line – ***The words of King Lemuel, this is the weight of truth which his mother taught him.*** Bathsheba will never write a book, but she will be alluded to over and over again in the Book of Proverbs.

Discovering her here in the Genealogy of Jesus isn't a stain on the record, it is a gem sparkling with forgiveness and grace.

Let me make two or three observations from our study of both her failure and her evident repentance and submission to God.

- **Number 1: Failure does not erase the potential of becoming a godly influence later in life.**

Just imagine who is telling Solomon these words, recorded in ***Proverbs chapter 31:10 – Solomon, an excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels – get this – the heart of her husband trusts in her.***

Man, I can imagine that Bathsheba taught that truth with tears in her eyes. She was unfaithful to her husband, and she no doubt lived with the pain of knowing that her infidelity indirectly led to the conspiracy that led to the death of her husband.

“I was involved in the deception; I was involved in the cover-up; I was involved in the silence. I was anything but trustworthy.”

“Solomon, take it from me: integrity in a person's life is priceless – it's worth more than all the rubies in the world.”

- **Secondly, it's possible for an ungodly person to repent and grow into a wise counselor.**

Listen as she teaches Solomon about the virtuous woman – *strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.*

Apart from repentance and restoration to her true and living God, Bathsheba would have had no reason to smile about the future.

In fact, she had every right to grow bitter – not better;

- she could have spent the rest of her life blaming David for abusing his power and position as King;
- she could have excused her sin on his lust and invitation into the palace;
- she could have blamed God for the way her life had turned out – the death of her husband; the death of her first born infant son; and on and on.

Somewhere in those silent years after her marriage to David, she took responsibility for her own sin, repented, and then committed her life to raising a son that she had dedicated unto God.

No doubt, every so often, she quietly weeps over the past, but Solomon writes that she is also smiling at the future.

- **One more: God’s grace can be found at work in your life, no matter what your past was like.**

In other words, the consequences of past sin that may indeed be lifelong do not eliminate the potential of the fruit of the Spirit in your walk with God today.

The truth is, she never lived down the whispers and the stares from others; she never lived past the gossip or infamy of her sin.

She will become a woman who had cared so much about names, but knew that her name would never be passed down. And to this day, Bathsheba isn’t in the book of popular names for little girls.

But she will also become a woman whose name will forever represent that testimony of a

second chance – and more – the truth that a sinful past can’t destroy the potential of a godly future and God-honoring legacy.

In fact, if we were God, by the time David got to Bathsheba, we would be done with David and Bathsheba would be nothing more than a footnote in history. Instead, David writes a song of repentance that we’ve all sung many times over.

And Bathsheba – of all people – who threw her marriage away, threw her husband away, and readily joined in the conspiracy of deception and silence – Bathsheba, a Hittite; a pagan – becomes a follower of God.

And she appears in this genealogy. She appears here as an obvious interruption in the flow of fathers and sons not to disgrace David, but to glorify God.

She is interjected into this list as a testimony to the compassion and mercy and forgiveness and grace of God.

She is *Exhibit A* for the hymn writer who describes us all when she, another redeemed woman, wrote these lyrics:

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
yonder on Calvary's mount out-poured,  
there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide,  
what can avail to wash it away!  
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide;  
whiter than snow you may be today. [Refrain]

Grace, grace, God’s grace  
grace that will pardon and cleanse within.  
Grace, grace, God’s grace  
grace that is greater than all our sin.<sup>vii</sup>

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/17/2017 by Stephen Davey.

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i Adapted from J. Allen Petersen, The Myth of the Greener Grass (Tyndale House, 1984)

ii [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2010surveillance/commentary.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2010surveillance/commentary.htm)

iii Robert Jeffress, The Solomon Secrets (Waterbrook Press, 2002), p. 118

iv <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/health/chlamydia-syphilis-gonorrhea.html>

v Adapted from Ibid

vi John Phillips, Exploring Proverbs, Volume One (Kregel, 1995), p. 18

vii Julia H. Johnston—1916, *Grace Greater than our Sin*