

The title of the book “And then...” (slide 41) came from a message I gave at a little church in Peoria a few years ago...and while the subtitle is “Never stop sharing stories”... a better subtitle might have been “how 2 tiny words can make a big difference”

The premise is that... if you live long enough...we have these critical moments in our life...where we have a decision to make...fragile moments...usually after a mistake...or when we're afraid...or when we forget who and whose we are...where we're tempted to give up and write “The End.”

Never (pause) Never...in our life do we seem to confuse an “and then” moment with a “the end” moment, than when we fail, or when we're gripped by fear, or when we've forgotten the promises of God...and forsaken our purpose... Let me say that again, nowhere in our lives is it easier to confuse an “and then” moment with a ...“the end” moment...like it is after we fail...or while we're gripped by fear...or when we've forgotten the promises of God.

Over the next few weeks I want us to look at some examples from Scripture of when we should...and how we can... write an “And then...” to our story...

All of us have failed...some of us have really blown it. For some of us it's from our past, no one knows about it and you'd be ashamed if anyone ever found out.

Maybe it's not a big, dark past ...but we've failed so many times in the same sinful behavior...it's becoming a pattern... We wonder if it's just who we are... or who we are doomed to become.

And without knowing how to process an “and then”...We've embraced a “The end”. We've blown it...big time and we've said “the end” to a marriage, a friendship, an idea or a business venture...or I hope this hasn't happened to you...but many have said “The End” to pursuing intimacy with God...

Today I want to look at one of these moments in scripture...specifically with a man named David. The Bible has a lot to say about David. David was a good man. He had an intimacy with God unlike anyone of his day.

He was a shepherd, and poet, musician, a warrior and then a king. We're going to look at just a few chapters in the story of his life where David failed...and it could have been “The End”...a case could be made that it should have been “The End”...Instead, this story leads us to one of the greatest “And then...”s in all of scripture.

The author of 2 Samuel records this for us in chapter 11. Let's take a look...

(Slide 42 )

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 11:1

Stop. Ok, who’s the king? David. Where should he be? In battle...I got a bad feeling about this already and we’re only 1 verse in to this story. The author is making it clear that whatever is about to happen...could have been avoided. Let’s go on.

Let me just read... (slide 43)

*It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”* (slide 44)

*So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her...Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”*

2 Samuel 11:2-5

Just... simple facts. No exaggeration. Let me summarize the rest of the story...

David sends for her husband Uriah who is one of his soldiers at war... Uriah returns...David tries to get him to go home to his wife so that the child will appear to be his own. But Uriah is a man of character and he will not go home while his men are still on the battle field. David gets him drunk and keeps him one more day in hopes that he’ll go home...He doesn’t. He sleeps on a mat with the other servants of the king. Uriah is a man of honor.

So David sends him back to his commander, Joab, with a letter. Uriah carries The letter with hand written instructions by David himself on how Uriah is to be murdered. Joab, carries out the order. They send Uriah up to the most intense part of the fighting...right up to the wall of the Ammonites...Joab then withdraws his men leaving Uriah exposed alone...and he is killed.

You can read all of this in 2 Samuel chapter 11...

Adultery, murder, deceit...sin upon sin...David has blown it...he’s failed as a leader, a husband, a father...as a man of faith...he’s failed. He then takes Bathsheba to be one of his wives...and David thinks he’s swept it under the rug.

Then the biggest understatement in the Bible, the end of verse 27... (slide - 45 )

*“But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.”*

Ya think?! I feel like the Lord is displeased ...because I've missed 24 days in the bible reading plan. David has blown it! Big time!

Time passes, the baby is born "...and then..."

Nathan the prophet, comes to confront the king... anyone want that job? Not a responsibility that anyone would want...so he uses a word picture about a poor family and a pet lamb...hoping to get the King to indict himself.

And he does...The king is outraged by the evil man in Nathan's parable...He says the man must repay 4 fold to restore the lamb and then he deserves to die....and Nathan says, "You are the man."

David's sins are exposed and God's sentence is stated...

the baby will die... there will be calamity on the house of David... the law states that the penalty for adultery is death. The penalty for murder is death.

It should be "the end" for David. But instead, we get to witness an "and then..."

David is broken and David repents after Nathan's rebuke...and David writes the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm,

And God preserves the perfect example of exactly how we should respond when we've failed.

Let's look at it together... (slide 46) I want to highlight 3 ingredients to embracing an "And then..." after we've failed.

Starting with 2 Samuel 12:13 and then we'll get in to Psalm 51...

Nathan has just rebuked David...David is a broken man. If you're taking notes...write this down in the margin, Psalm 32. Read psalm 32 if you want to see the torment that David has been under while hiding this sin. He's broken...he's ready to restore the lost intimacy with God... here we go. (slide 47)

*"Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'" – 2 Samuel 12:13*

The first way to respond when we've blown it...is so simple. (slide 48)

**Confess it.**

David confesses it. We see him just come clean with God. After we've blown it...We've got to get honest. Get it out in the open. Stop the secrecy. Stop the rationalizing. Stop minimizing.

Stop saying everyone else does it. Stop comparing yourself to someone else that does it worse. Just stop...and confess it.

That's what David did. He got to the point where he says, "I have sinned against the Lord."

This is the most difficult step. But without it...the other 2 mean nothing. With a broken and contrite heart David Confesses his sin.

Now verse 1 and 2 of Psalm 51... (slide 49)

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!*

Do you notice the verbs? He's saying, have mercy. Blot out. Wash away. Cleanse me. All things that God must do.

He's not negotiating a settlement. He's not saying, "Now God, I'll do this if you do this." No excuses. David doesn't exercise his Kingly authority...that would have allowed him to justify his actions as necessary to meet the needs of a King.

No. He comes to God without merit. No intentions of cutting a deal or trying harder next time...He comes simply saying "On the basis of your character," 2 things he cites.... (slide 50)  
Your steadfast love and your abundant mercy.

David has a history with God. He knows Him well. David was a good man in a weak moment...

He says, "God, on the basis of who you are, not on the basis of what I have done, will you wash, and cleanse me?"

David has confessed it...Next, we see David Own it. (slide 51)

We see this in verses 3 – 5... (slide 52)

He says, "For I know," ...and notice there are going to be 5 different times in these 3 little verses, he is going to own his sin...

For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.

Does that feeling sound familiar? That sin that we committed 15 years ago. We can't get it out of our mind. We remember it all the time. (slide 53)

<sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

See what he's doing? He owns it.

By the way, David isn't blaming his mom he's saying my sin problem is so big it goes all the way back to my roots. We sin, not only by choice but by nature. We're all sinners.

David doesn't make excuses...he owns it. It was sin. And he owns the consequences, his family from then on... You can go on in 2 Samuel and read about his sons, Amnon and Absalom. I read those verses as the father of 4 boys and it's Heartbreaking. The consequences... David owns it.

Some of you are leaders...you're the boss...a dad or mom, coaches...teachers... There is something extremely attractive about a leader that owns it. When a team fails or an individual makes a bad call...

When the leader owns it...at a very high level...that's a leader worth following.

Some of us have failed...and when we confess it there will be consequences. There will be repayment. Trophies may get returned. Jobs will be lost...Own it.

I love Vs. 10... (slide 54 ). Some of us need to underline this and make it a daily prayer...  
*"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."*

I find it interesting that this word "create" is the same word used in Genesis to indicate God doing something that only God can do. God, speaking into existence something that never was. To create out of nothing. This is way deeper than wash me white as snow...as if like a garment was stained. David's asking for a miracle.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

If you've blown it and you've never confessed it, get honest... Confess it and then ask him to forgive you. He wants to forgive you.

And then we see David do something so strange and beautiful. David owns it...confesses it (slide 55)...then he flips it.

Here is what I mean by that... 2 ways that David "Flips it"... First he flips the situation and commits to take his failure and use it for good. (slide 56) Look at vs. 13...

*Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.*

David commits to using this failure. This incredible sin... to teach those who have made the same mistakes how to be restored...to help those generations that come after him. He uses his failure to teach others how to return to God. I would say mission accomplished, as here we are 3,000 years later...learning from his text.

Here is what I would say to encourage us.... Don't cheat God out of your story of restoration. Allow Him to work through you to help others. It's possible that your greatest failure...your greatest embarrassment...that place that you've blown it...it's possible that your story will be the conduit through which God wants to minister to others.

Don't cheat God out of an opportunity for him to have the greatest impact through your life.

But then the second way he flips it...is he flips the page in his story...yes it's a part of his past and he's going to use it to teach others, but he accepts God's forgiveness so quickly and flips the page to celebrating grace and being forgiven. (slide 57) There's a major shift in verse 6 and now it turns very positive.

*Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart...  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice... (slide58 )*

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit...*

*Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, (slide 59 )  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

He's flipping the page, He's saying "This is what happened, now God, help me move on,... God wants that for you! Too often we say I know God can forgive me...but I can never forgive myself. Really? That's not what God wants for you.

And I get it. We feel like we owe God and those around us, a season of regret ...a penance of sorts...after we've confessed and owned it.

And we're a little offended when someone does something wrong...and moves on too quickly...

Parents, you know what I'm talking about. You discipline your kid...then you see them just shrug it off and move on...and you think. Dang! I didn't ground them long enough.

Look at how quick David turns the page on this feeling of remorse...celebrating God's grace. And Nathan doesn't say...whoa, whoa there buddy. Don't forget what you've done...Let's make sure you're really sorry before you start to rejoice.

No, Nathan says... (slide 60)

*The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die - 2 Samuel 12:14*

I have a friend who I met while I was in College...He didn't attend college with me but we became friends while I was at Cedarville University. A few years ago...He blew it...I mean he was accused of some terrible things.

Newspaper headlines... He was found guilty. It was devastating for those of us that are his friends. His family...is still forced to wrestle with it. It's impacted the reputation of the family name. There was some community outrage...which is understandable.

He's in Prison today and I've had the chance to talk to him a couple of times.

He's confessed it. He's owned it... To be honest, I'm a little taken back by the joy in his heart. He's flipped it. All he wants to talk about is how God has forgiven him and is using him to minister to other inmates. And I'll admit I don't know all the specific details of that situation... but the joy I hear in his voice is surprising.

Some of his family members... their biggest complaint...He doesn't seem remorseful enough. "Yeah, he's in prison for the next 20 years but when we talk to him...He sounds so, so...forgiven."

That's exactly what we see David do. He flips the page so quick. He's so confident in his relationship with God...he's so sure of his forgiveness...It's almost offensive.

Now, when we read Psalm 51 and we put ourselves in David's shoes...isn't God's mercy and grace pretty sweet. Message over... (slide 61)  
3 variables in the formula for writing an "And then..." after we've failed.

But allow me to take another approach and land this plane on a different runway...

Can you imagine? Your king...your leader...Adultery, Murder.... then hearing the spiritual leader of the day say, "the Lord has put away his sin... he's been pardoned." We might have a problem with that. Why? Because deep down inside we want justice.

Imagine being Uriah's mom. David has just murdered your son...a faithful soldier, a man of character...in order to cover up an affair with your daughter-in-law.

How do you feel when you find out that the Lord says, "I have put away your sin, you shall not die." That's outrageous!

How about Bathsheba's dad. How's that feel? We are told his name. Eliam. What if you're him? This guy slept with your daughter and killed your son-in-law and the consequences are a dead grandchild.

I would go to jail for what I would want to do David if that was my daughter. And then to hear Nathan the prophet say, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die." What about the Law!

And then, can you imagine, bumping into this guy at church...singing praise songs because of the joy of being forgiven? This is outrageous!

Why? Because we want justice...and there is something within me that wants to be assured that we are following a God who wants justice too.

Funny how When we just put ourselves in David's shoes in this story it's easy to celebrate grace and mercy...justice feels so unnecessary. But put yourself in the shoes of anybody else close to this situation and we immediately feel like we've been deprived of...justice.

Do you feel the tension between the justice we deserve and the mercy we receive...if not, we don't really understand the significance of this passage.

Until we wrestle with the justice we want and the mercy we witness... then... the WAY this tension is resolved in the Bible won't impact you.

"The Lord has put away your sin..."

Outrageous. Our outrage would be justified...except for one thing...The greatest "And then..." in the Bible. We find it in the New Testament.

It's found in the book of Romans...(slide 62) The Apostle Paul's audience understood the necessity of Justice...better than we do.

Grace and mercy didn't make as much sense then as it does in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. How could God be righteous...and simply put away...or pass over this sin?

Notice how Paul explains the resolution to this tension to his audience...Romans 3



*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is Christ Jesus.*

Now watch this. This next verse is perhaps the most important verse in all of the Bible, certainly the most important in terms of how Jesus Christ relates to King David...and other people of faith in the old testament. Look at what Paul says... (slide 63)

*God, put Jesus forward as a... Big word... propitiation, (slide 64)* Be careful you say that to fast you might slip and say a word Damon would use in a message....

This is an important word, that means a wrath removing sacrifice, *by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show that God was righteous!*

That's why Jesus died. He died to prove that God is righteous. You say, I thought he died for me because he loves. He pursues you because he loves you, He died to prove that God is righteous and to pay for justice.

Let's keep reading...

*Because, now here is our problem being solved, Because in his divine forbearance he had passed over...same meaning as when Nathan said "put away" ... he passed over former sins. Outrageous...unless this works.*

*It was to show [God's] righteousness at the present time, so that [God] might be just AND the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

If you're a not a Christ follower here today...and you were starting to feel some of this outrage of the mercy extended to King David...understand... that your forgiveness is at stake.

Believers here today... and we want to project our understanding of judgement and justice upon other believers that have failed and blown it... Just know that our forgiveness is at stake!

(slide 65)

If that doesn't work...what are we doing here? Christianity is a fraud, if this doesn't work.

But if this works, ...then we have the best news in all the world. We have the greatest "And then..." in the middle of the greatest story ever told!

Pastor and Author Chip Ingram tells the story of a certain struggle... and he was explaining to a friend how he was confident that God had forgiven him but He just couldn't forgive himself.

The guy says, Ingram, how arrogant can you be? Chip said, "what do you mean?" His friend said, "You're arrogant." He said, "No, I'm not, I just can't forgive myself"

His friend said, "Now let me get this right, chip. God looks at your situation and He's taken the guilt of your sin, taken it off of you..."

Pay attention because this friend understands the meaning of this word....

He says, Now let me get this right, Chip. God looks at your situation and He's taken the guilt of your sin, taken it off of you allowed Jesus to hang on a cross, who was perfect, fully God, fully man, and He placed it all on Him for the purchase price and payment, and God has declared you innocent and declared that Christ's payment of His pure blood pays for it. And you're going to say to God. "that's not quite good enough for me?"

See how ridiculous that is?

We can't flip the page unless we can accept...not understand... just simply accept what Jesus has done for us on the cross. We can be forgiven.

And it's not because of who you are. It's because of who God is. He doesn't love like other people. He loves you unconditionally. Flip the page and accept the full work of the cross.

The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ...THAT's the greatest "And then..." in the history of the world.

I wonder...what would it look like for a confused and skeptical world to witness apprentices of Jesus who stopped pretending and hiding...stopped playing games...A church that got serious about the "and then..." of their individual stories.

Don't let the enemy silence you with a "The end" when God has made a way for you to write an "And then..." for your life.

David blew it. But he confessed it. He owned it. He flipped it.

If you can relate... now is the time to...

Confess our sin

Own the consequences

& and Flip our failure to minister to others and flip the page of our story and truly accept God's forgiveness

Let's pray... (slide: blank 66 )

With every head bowed...maybe you're listening today and you've yet to start your relationship with God. You've been investigating this man Jesus. You've been observing these so called Christ Followers.

But you've heard something today... and it's clicked. And you say Scott, what do I need to do to receive this grace and mercy.

God has made it so easy. The Bible says that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Pray this prayer with me. There is no magic in these words...it's simply believing them in your heart. Put a stake in the ground today by saying...

God I admit that I'm a sinner.(wait) I believe Jesus died on a cross to pay for my sins. (wait)I believe he rose from the grave and is alive today. (wait)Right now I confess, Jesus Christ as my Lord. (wait)From this day forward...You're the boss.