

Good morning, friends! So glad you're here with us. We are spending these 3 weeks in a series called "Dangerous Prayers," looking at three of the most audacious prayers in the Bible... here in the book of Psalms, all written by David from various times in his life.

If you're anything like me, your prayer life is fraught with repetition, aimlessness, AND shallowness, at best. (**IF** we're even praying in the first place!). The heart behind this series is to **get honest** with ourselves, and the people around us, and to **give voice** to the prayers we've been avoiding for our entire lives. Do you have a desire... A stirring... A PRAYER... Deep within yourself that you've never voiced out loud? Maybe it's because you're **afraid** of what might happen if we begin praying it? Actually, that's **EXACTLY** what it is... We're terrified of what it might mean for us; for our comfortable lives; for our control; for our bank accounts and schedules and priorities... **If we were to pray these hidden prayers.**

- **Maybe you've always felt called to adopt**, but you're afraid that if you share that with your spouse, and if you begin praying through that, that you actually might end up adopting. And all that change and chaos... You're afraid of.
- Maybe you've spent your career chasing money and stability and a big, corner office, but you've seen the extent of happiness that money can bring, and you want to **begin giving it away...** But if you start praying for opportunities to GIVE, you'll find them, and that's scary.
- **Maybe you feel a stirring within you to stand up for our Muslim brothers and sisters, and our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in the wake of last Sunday's tragedy...** but you're afraid that if you begin praying that prayer that God might actually call you to stand up and do something. And that's not safe. It's dangerous.

It's our responsibility as God's children to **LISTEN TO HIM**, and to engage with what He's calling us to engage with. If we don't, we become like little, entitled, rich kids... Acting like we're in charge while we play with our Daddy's money. If God is calling us away from safety, security and comfort, we **MUST** pay attention, and we must be willing to (at least!) begin praying these prayers.

These three weeks are a very intentional progression of prayer... Starting with last week, which was "Search me." **All about recognizing that God fully knows us and fully loves us.** About being vulnerable. Testing our motives. About revealing hidden parts of ourselves.

This week, our prayer is "Break me." and we'll be talking about humility, repentance, and being broken by God, so that we might **do something of significance with our lives.**

And that's what next week will be about. "Send me." Perhaps the most 'dangerous' thought of all. **What if God created you for a purpose? What if He has a VERY specific calling on your life; to GO; to BE; to SERVE; to GIVE; to CHANGE; to LOVE...?** Jeff will share more next week.

But for this week, this middle step on our journey, we'll be in **Psalms 51.**

*1 Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.*

*2 Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.*

*3 For I recognize my rebellion;
it haunts me day and night.*

*4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your sight.
You will be proved right in what you say,
and your judgment against me is just.*

*5 For I was born a sinner—
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.*

*6 But you desire honesty from the womb,
teaching me wisdom even there.*

*7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

*8 Oh, give me back my joy again;
you have broken me—
now let me rejoice.*

*9 Don't keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.*

*10 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.*

For any of you that know David's story, you know that he had **HIGH** points, and he had some pretty serious **LOW** points. We're joining him here at perhaps the darkest season of his life.

You see, in one of David's moments of letting his EGO flare out of control, he decided to **act on a sexual impulse in a way that changed his life forever**. David lived in a palace, and therefore had a view out across the whole city. One day while he was walking on the roof of his palace, he looked down and noticed a woman bathing on her roof. Bathing on your roof in that day was probably a pretty private place to do it, but she clearly didn't account for David's view from the palace. And David, being King, sent his men to get her and bring her to the palace. (Not very romantic...) David sleeps with her, and she becomes pregnant.

Here's the problem... She's already married. And her husband, Uriah, is one of David's soldiers. When David found out about this, he tried to manipulate the situation to make it look like Uriah had gotten Bathsheba pregnant, but here's the problem: **Uriah was out at battle with David's men.** While David's soldiers were out fighting some enemy, David was home, raped and impregnated one of his soldier's wives.

David tried to trick Uriah to come home from battle and sleep with Bathsheba, but **Uriah's character was so strong that he refused.** While the other men were out fighting, Uriah refused to enjoy the luxury of sleeping at home with his wife.

So David did what any desperate, power-drunk leader would do... He sent Uriah back to battle, but this time to the front lines, which was a guaranteed death-sentence... **And that's exactly what happened.**

So... Here's our wonderful King David. Let's tally up his sin in this little debacle:

- **Lust:** He saw a woman naked, and not only that, but he immediately wanted to sleep with her.
- **Rape:** I'm quite certain that Bathsheba was perfectly happy bathing by herself, and probably very happy in her marriage as well. Having the King's soldiers come and take you from your peaceful bath to the palace against your will... In today's conversation around rape on college campuses, I'm sure Bathsheba didn't grant consent... And even if she said "No," David wasn't going to hear it.
- **Lying:** To Uriah, trying to save his own tail by facilitating Uriah and Bathsheba sleeping together...
- Then, the crowning jewel: **First degree murder.** Premeditated and intentional. Murdering Uriah.

So David does all of this, he's probably pretty torn-up inside about it, especially because he's a musician, and **we musicians are VERY SENSITIVE!** But largely nothing happens. He marries Bathsheba and keeps going on with his life. He's king, after all. He does what he wants.

Until... Nathan steps in. And Nathan is probably one of the most important people in David's life, because of this pivotal moment. Nathan was a **prophet** (i.e. very weird person that says weird things on behalf of God) and he wasn't afraid of David, and telling it like it is. **Nathan visits David and confronts David about the whole thing.** He tells David a story about a rich man stealing from a poor man and how what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah is exactly the same. Nathan went to David on behalf of God to grab him by the shirt collar and shake him awake; to bring him back to his senses.

This is what leads us to Psalm 51. David made these terrible decisions, Nathan confronts him, and we find David here in a moment of brokenness.

In **v. 3**, David says *"I recognize my rebellion..."* Let's pause on that. Think about how **RARE** that is today. When was the last time you heard someone actually acknowledge their sin? When was the last time YOU acknowledged your sin? See, we're in the business of justifying our actions, and we're **MASTERS** at it. **We can manipulate the most overt sin into a padded, safe story with a great excuse and a silky transition into the next conversation.**

We just bought my childhood home in Westford, which has been amazing so far. We've exorcised all of the demons from my childhood, and my son is sleeping in the same room I grew up in.. It's very cool. But! With homeownership comes homeownership-responsibility. Like **YARD WORK!** What the heck is yard work?! Earlier this week, I finally pulled the old lawn mower out and decided to tackle the 18 inch grass surrounding our home. And as my trusty lawnmower tore through the jungle, **I found a snake!**

And it wasn't a small snake. It was easily over two feet long, and I was wearing thick yard gloves, so I picked it up. It bared its little fangs but I grabbed it up behind the head (like they do on the TV shows) so it didn't bite me. After bringing it to the door to show Elyse, and having her threaten divorce, I carried it down the street to set it free. As I was walking it kept squirming out of my grip. **No matter how hard I squeezed it, it just seemed to contract its body, and slowly wriggle and inch forward.** By the time I got to the woods, I was basically holding it by the tail.

Snakes are built to slither out of tight spaces. And apparently, so are humans. When we realize there's a threat of being "outed" or "caught" or "trapped"... We begin manufacturing stories in our head. We shift blame. We bend the truth. We shade the situation in whatever color best suits us. We are in the business of self-preservation.

- But what if that instinct of self-preservation is exactly our problem when it comes to walking with God?
- What if these moments where we get "caught" are **facilitated** by God?
- What if they're actually for our good?

Was David a better man after Nathan confronted him? **Absolutely.** Was it painful and awkward and confusing? As you read through Psalm 51, you can confidently say, "YES. It was." There's nothing pretty about allowing yourself to be broken... It's not pretty but it is purifying.

Here's the thing about these crucible moments... When the heat is turned up and there's nowhere to run... It will either purify you, as it does a fine metal like silver or gold... or it will harden you beyond repair, like steel.

We must ALLOW ourselves to be broken. Or else we'll spend the rest of our lives with hardened hearts. Instead of purging the impurities, as we're designed (and begged) to do by God, we harden. Because it's safer. It's easier. It's less messy. But it's entirely missing the point.

Here's what's at stake... This might be one of the most dangerous things you ever come to believe: **You exist for a reason.** For a good reason. You are not an accident. God had a very specific thing in mind when He formed you.

- What if God wanted a wonderful, caring father for your children, and so He created you?
- What if God wanted an honest, hardworking salesman in your company, and so He created you?
- What if God wanted someone to launch a non-profit to serve refugees, and so He created you?
- What if God... (**consider speaking to specific people**)

You can name it your "calling" or "purpose" or "the meaning of life..." Trust me, **God's vision for your life is FAR better than your vision for your life.** And we need to trust that. If we continue to believe that we know more than God; if we believe that we're better Captains; better Kings or Queens... We'll miss the whole thing.

Here's our temptation: To form our lives around the vision **WE HAVE** for our lives. We pick up little things here and there... *"Ooo! A little bit of money, a little bit of fame, little bit of luxury, little bit of wisdom, grab some friends, maybe a family, works sucks but it pays the bills..."* It's what EVERYTHING around us is telling us we need and we should form our lives around.

But we aren't designed to be formed in our own image. **We are designed to be formed in the image of God.** That was the original intent, that broke down at the beginning. And God wants nothing more than to see His son's character resurrected within each of us. **But we must allow ourselves to be broken.**

Being "**broken**" doesn't make sense when we're talking about growth. When things break, especially in the 21st century, they end up in the trash. 50 years ago, if you broke the heel off your favorite pair of high-heels, you'd bring it to a cobbler. Now we hop on Amazon/Zappos for a replacement pair. Same thing for computers, cars, sometimes even relationships. (Too heavy? Sorry...) But in Scripture, and in living a life of faith, being "broken" is a **necessary** step in growth.

Growing up, I spent every summer on a little island in Maine. I come from a family of lobstermen, so when I was old enough, I started lobstering with them. When you bring a set of traps up, they've been sitting on the ocean floor for the past 3 days, and they're full of all sort of crazy stuff. **As the stern-man, my job was to grab all the crabs and eels and baby lobsters and throw them back into the ocean, clean out the old bait bag, and collect the lobsters that were "keepers."** You'd measure them, then check that they're not a pregnant female, and then band them and toss them in the tank.

And because lobsters molt, like a snake sheds its' skin, every once in a while you'd get either a really **HARD** lobster (which we cleverly called "Hard shells"), or a really **SOFT** lobster (which we'd call "Jelly Bellies").

For those of you that don't know: Lobsters develop their shells underneath their previous one. Their previous shell gets really, really hard, then cracks open and the lobster sort of shimmy out. **The Jelly Bellie that comes out is so soft that you can fold it up in your hand like a snowball.** The shell is so soft, you can tear it like tissue paper. They'll typically hide in a little cave for a month while the shell hardens, then they'll come back out and eat and interact with all their little lobster buddies.

Here's the point: For a lobster to grow, it must be broken. It becomes more vulnerable than ever before in its life... Because **growth** is at stake. If a lobster refuses to molt... It would become stunted, and would likely end its life prematurely.

My encouragement for us today to be **JELLY BELLIES!** Be willing to step into a moment or season of brokenness for the sake of growth... **For the sake of what God has planned for you. If you refuse to allow yourself to be broken, you're refusing to grow.**

God wants nothing more than to see His son's character resurrected within each of us. But we must allow ourselves to be broken. Allowing ourselves to be broken is the **foundation** of identifying with Jesus, and allowing Him to come alive in us.

Can you imagine how different the image of the crucifixion would be if Jesus resisted arrest, punching and kicking and screaming, spitting in soldier's faces, doing everything to wriggle free from the trap...? **But He didn't.** He knew His path would require being broken... And He walked that path; painstaking and gut-wrenching as it was... **He was broken so that He could show us what it meant to be whole.** To be One with the Father.

Imagine the heartache and compassion that a surgeon feels when someone is in **denial** of their illness... The surgeon knows the diagnosis: The disease requires surgery, immediately... But the patient is in denial. They look down at their body and say, "*I don't see any disease! I'm not having surgery!*" The surgeon has everything she needs to save this man's life, but his refusal; his denial; his failing attempts at SELF-preservation... **Are actually leading to his demise.**

An enormous part of this is to **admit** that we are broken so that God can make us whole. We can spend the rest of our lives refusing surgery, while we're standing face-to-face with the Master Surgeon. Someone, who if we're willing to be broken, can open us up, remove the disease and make us whole again.

Guys, I'm not standing up here because it's my job. I'm not talking about Psalm 51 because I was forced to. I have no motivation to be here speaking to you about this other than for maybe one or two of you to be convinced to be **honest** with yourself.

Isn't it exhausting keeping your guard up?
Pretending all the time?
It's time to be honest.

About 2.5 years ago I was invited to do the same. I was just starting the 10,000 Fathers Worship School and there was conversation around "soul ties" and things (on the spiritual side of life) that were keeping me stuck or not fully present, unable to grow...

And I was invited to dig deep back into my childhood, in prayer, and unearth memories I wanted to keep buried for the rest of my life. **And I did.** And I did something that I never expected myself to do. **I was honest.** And I shared.

I spoke out loud, for the first time in my life, about being molested as a child. Not by a family member, not by someone that was even in my life anymore... But by saying those words, and acknowledging that for whatever reason, sexuality was introduced to me WAY earlier than it should've been... There were all of these things in my adolescence that I could now understand... **Girlfriend after girlfriend, being unfaithful to them, no regard for true intimacy. Now it had its root. Exposed.**

And after I spilled all of that out... Honestly, I felt vacant. There was 10-15 minutes of nothingness. I was sort of numb, in shock that I had just unearthed that. Then... They gave us

time to pray again, and hear from God. Just being wide open, saying “*Ok God, I believe that you speak to us, tell me how you view me, tell me my true name...*”

And I remember all of the people around me were getting these awesome names, like “Warrior of Light” and “Faithful Father”... And you know what God said to me?

“*I am whole.*” I am whole? What kind of name is that?

Well.. It’s exactly what God wanted to say to me. He wanted me to know that in my brokenness, and it my honesty, He had made me whole again.

And that’s exactly what I want to say to you this morning.

To find wholeness in Christ, we must allow ourselves to be broken.

If don’t have a Nathan in your life, **find one**. We need someone in our life that isn’t impressed with us; someone that isn’t afraid of us; someone that **loves** us. **Nathan was sent by God to confront the King.**

Side note: If you hear about Nathan and immediately **want to be a Nathan** in someone else’s life, then you probably need a Nathan in your life. If your immediate reaction is to confront and condemn the sin in people’s lives around you, then you need a Nathan in your life to show **YOU** the plank in your eye. Can we be Nathan’s in other people’s lives? Absolutely. But when we go them, may our hearts be completely broken for them and their situation. **We cannot confront sin in other people’s lives unless we’re willing to weep with them.**

So... A big part of this series is **actually taking action**. I refuse to allow us to walk out of here without at least giving God a moment to speak to us individually. I could keep talking up here, but that wouldn’t do anyone any good. **I’ve said what I needed to say, and its time to let God speak.**

We’ve put these little strips of paper on your seats, with the tiniest prayer prompt, saying “*Break Me...*” There are pens in cups at the ends of all the rows, feel free to grab one of those. We’re going to allow some space here for honesty. We’re inviting you: Put pen to paper. **Say what you need to say. Pray what you need to pray.**

And at the end of the day, if you didn’t get one last week, you can grab one of these little keychains, roll that prayer up and put it inside, along with your “Search Me” prayer from last week. And carry that with you for the week ahead. **To be reminded that God fully knows us, and that we are fully whole, by allowing ourselves to be broken.**

We’ll begin that time now...

Prayer: Lord, in our brokenness, we come before You. We pray that you honor our honesty, with You and with ourselves. We need Your Son to resurrect within us, to make us whole again, and to give our lives a sense of purpose.