

# Wings

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*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## Confronting Sin

The hardest task we'll ever face is to confront a friend with his sin. No matter how difficult it may be, it needs to be done. But doing it successfully requires wisdom.

"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon"' (2 Sam. 12:7-9).

The Bible contains numerous stories of prophets standing up to wayward kings (think of Moses and Pharaoh, Elijah and Ahab, John the Baptist and Herod), but the story of Nathan and David stands in a category all by itself. Whereas the other stories involve evil kings and God-fearing prophets — natural enemies — these two men were good friends who shared a common devotion to serving God and His people. When Nathan confronted David with his sin,

he was not merely challenging a tyrant who needed to be knocked down a few notches; he was pleading with a friend to accept responsibility for a damning mistake he had made in his life. Confronting David on this occasion had to be the hardest thing Nathan ever had to do in his career as a prophet. But he did it. And his intervention was successful in getting David to turn his life around.

Nathan's rebuke of David provides a good lesson for us on how to confront sin, especially when the sinner is a friend of ours. This lesson is useful for personal friends, as well as preachers and elders working with a congregation.

First, notice that Nathan's rebuke was specific and direct. He did not condemn sin in general and hope David got the hint. He spelled out what David had done, and clearly identified it as a rejection of God. As difficult as it may be to throw a friend's mistakes in his face, it must be done if the friend cannot or will not face his errors himself.

However, before Nathan nailed David with this charge, he had to prepare his friend to see his crimes objec-

tively, without being blinded by pride. Nathan's fictional story of the rich man who stole the poor man's ewe lamb to feed a guest was a brilliant stroke that enabled David to clearly see his outrageous conduct. By condemning the rich man, David was condemning himself. Nathan's firm declaration, "You are the man!" was the turning point that put David on the road to repentance. Confronting a friend's sin must be direct, but it must be done carefully, in a manner that enables the friend to appreciate the need for a change in his life.

One more thought: The sins that Nathan confronted on this occasion were not the only mistakes David made in his life. But Nathan was not on a crusade to harass David regarding every flaw and imperfection on his record. Friends know that discernment must be used when deciding to challenge the faults of others (Matt. 7:2; Jas 2:13).

There is no greater service that we can render a friend than to help him see his failures and make improvements in his life (Jas. 5:19-20). But it takes a wise heart to do it correctly.

– David King