

Out the Window
2 Samuel 11:1–2
Arise to follow the Lord today.

Has the summer been a time of spiritual progress or malaise?

You are in Jerusalem, David's new capital city. God prefers that, rather than building the Lord's house, David set himself to building up his own home by becoming a good father and husband. Rejecting the Lord's calling, David lays the groundwork for trouble.

*Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go forth 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. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking upon the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.

Reflection

Here, we see the pattern we noted earlier really proves problematic. While other kings are off fighting, David remains in Jerusalem and sends Joab. David is having a bit of what the British call a "lie in," awaking "late in the afternoon." He is bored. He has lost his sense of purpose and direction. He searches for something to give him a spark, some jolt of pleasure, some shot of purpose to reawaken his dormant faculties. And so, he surveys his kingdom, looking for something to amuse his bored soul. Just as the jaded Michal watched everyone praising God before the ark from her room, so the wearied David looks out from his room while his army is off fighting. And just as Michal saw David exposed, so David sees Bathsheba bathing. Rather than Michal's envy, however, David experiences lust. This is precisely what happens when we let our desires run wild: we live zombie-like for whatever pleases us in the moment, and as we become aware that nothing can quite quell our impulses, we become bored, morally anemic, and narcissistic.

The image of "looking out" is reminiscent of what Evagrius said when he described the slothful monk. Evagrius described the slothful monk as looking out the window and wishing he was anywhere else. Sloth is a kind of

dissatisfaction or disillusionment with one's circumstances. Because the slothful person forsakes responsibility and hard work (much like David, who did not join his military in battle), he is not involved in the situation or work before him. The slothful person is "elsewhere," looking out the window. He has flitting eyes and a wandering spirit. The slothful person who looks for "greener pastures" is unwilling to accept what God has given and offer himself to God, but rather demands that his desires be met before he surrenders to God in love. The slothful person lives in a kind of limbo. He does not approach his circumstances with moral earnestness and is very slack with his duties (like parenting, prayer, workplace ethics, being a spouse, etc.) because he sees his present circumstances as less than real or unworthy of his effort. His duties are beneath him, and therefore, he deserves exceptions to the morality of the commoner.

This is one of the key symptoms of sloth: instability. The slothful person is perennially discontent. He is incapable of seeing a task through. He looks earnestly for the next thing, the next job, or the next place, but once he has it, he quickly finds it as uninteresting as what he had before. And so, he never applies himself fully and morally to his circumstances. He holds out for something else to which he will truly give himself. This is because sloth—at bottom—is an indifference for reality. This opens up the slothful soul to an array of sins.

The remedy for slothful instability is perseverance. Dom Jean-Charles Nault explains that such "perseverance is not a blind resignation, but a waiting truly conscious of God, oriented toward a direct and personal encounter with him" (Noonday Devil, p. 239). In other words, perseverance is not to be reduced to just an indifferent acceptance of one's fate. Rather, it is an active sacrifice, a disciplining of one's desires, an offering of one's self in all that one does for communion with God in all things.

If you find yourself looking out the window or peering down from your balcony in your life, scanning the scenery for something new, something entertaining, or more pleasant; if you find yourself scrolling through social media, browsing online shops, looking for new jobs or houses, you may be struggling with the instability that is sloth. Do you feel disconnected from your current circumstances, such that you are looking for or fantasizing about the next thing? Is God calling you to remain in your situation and overcome your sloth?

Ask him directly in prayer today.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 5 Action Items

Bookend your day with a morning offering and nightly examen.

Check in with your anchor.

Don't give in to distractions.

Invite men to join your fraternity for Kings of Summer, Part 2.