

Discussion Questions: February 18, 2018
Family Matters
2 Samuel 13:1-39



MAIN POINT

God created us for relationships, and He wants us to exhibit godly love as we relate to one another.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is the greatest TV family of all time? Why?

Why do you think so many people can be so good at other areas in their lives and yet struggle in their familial relationships?

What are common problems that create conflict in families? Why might such conflicts continue for years without resolution? What kinds of scars do people carry as a result?

Sooner or later every family experiences conflict. Sadly, family members often don't resolve their conflicts. Instead, they nurse grudges, square off in opposing camps, and plot possible paybacks. Let's see what happened in David's family.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

In the aftermath of David's adulterous affair, his family life imploded around him. The initial fracture occurred in relation to his daughter Tamar. Amnon, David's oldest son, lusted after his half-sister.

Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 13:1-18.

Do a character sketch of Amnon just based on verses 1-5. What do you learn? In contrast, what kind of woman was Tamar?

In a large-scale sense, what can we say about the way sin works in our lives based on this passage?

Tamar wasn't flaunting her beauty; in fact, she is presented as a woman of the Torah. Amnon thought Tamar was beautiful and fell in love with her. "Love" translates a word meaning "to have a strong emotional attachment." Amnon's desire for Tamar rested primarily in her physical appearance, so "lust" is a better description of his feelings. His desire contrasted sharply with her desire to remain a virgin. In the case of Amnon, we can see a pattern of sin very clearly. It's the same pattern that we find in our lives.

Look again at verses 6-16. What does Tamar do in response to Amnon's advances?

How did Amnon act after he raped Tamar? How is that an example of the way sin works?

How does this story reveal our need for the gospel? How do we fight off sins like lust from a gospel-centered perspective?

Tamar used a verbal form of “no” four different times in response to Amnon’s advances. But Amnon didn’t listen. What happened was the direct opposite of what sin’s tempting lure promised. Amnon ended up hating what he was convinced would make him happy and fulfilled. That is the cruelty of sin and the deception we fall into. But it’s also a reminder of how much we need Jesus. Only Jesus can satisfy our deepest longings. Sin is, in a sense, an attempt to satisfy ourselves when we were made to be satisfied by God.

Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 13:19-22.

How did Absalom show courage in the way he treated Tamar? How did he show cowardice as well?

What was surprising about David’s response to Amnon’s action? What might have motivated him to respond in this way?

Where did both Absalom and David fall short in their reaction to Amnon’s sin? How did David’s apathy cause turmoil in the family?

Amnon’s treatment of his half-sister shamed and embarrassed David and the entire royal family. However, neither David nor Absalom confronted Amnon about his evil actions. By failing to confront Amnon, Absalom allowed the conflict to worsen. Similarly, David’s apathy and silence seems strange from one who typically acted quickly and decisively. Perhaps he felt he couldn’t judge Amnon because of his own past sins, or maybe he was protecting his first born. David’s failure to act paved the way for greater tragedy.

Skim 2 Samuel 14:1-24. What happened next in Absalom and David’s lives? What became of their relationship?

Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 14:25-33.

What do these verses tell us about Absalom’s relationship with his father? What do we learn about Absalom’s character from this sequence of events?

What do you think was Absalom’s real motive for coming back to Jerusalem?

To what extent did Absalom and David experience reconciliation?

When Absalom returned to Jerusalem, David refused to see or talk with his son. Why David refused to see Absalom is unclear, but as a result a tragic delay occurred in resolving this conflict and moving toward genuine reconciliation. David and Absalom were amicable again, but true reconciliation never took place in this family. Partial reconciliation does not heal the wounds of apathy and bitterness. Only full reconciliation accomplished through humility and forgiveness can remove old hurts and create a renewed relationship.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How might God be encouraging you to seek reconciliation in a particular relationship or to help others do so?

While those who have caused pain to us or our loved ones may deserve harsh judgment, how should we react?

How would you describe “true reconciliation”? Why is it so difficult?

PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God that He is not apathetic toward us. Pray that God would lead us into healthy and godly relationships with our friends, family members, and fellow believers. Pray that those relationships would be characterized by love and reconciliation.

COMMENTARY

2 Samuel 13:1-39

13:1 David had several wives, and he fathered many children by them (3:2-5; 5:13-16). Both Absalom and Tamar had Maacah as their mother, whereas Amnon, David’s firstborn son, had Ahinoam as his mother. The words was infatuated with her may also be translated as “loved her,” but Amnon’s actions toward Tamar show that he never really loved her.

13:2-3 Amnon was frustrated because he wanted Tamar for his wife, but he could not marry his half sister (Lv 18:11; 20:17). Jonadab was Amnon’s friend and cousin. Shrewd is literally “wise,” but Jonadab’s wisdom was clearly not used for godly means. Jonadab devised a plan by which Amnon could get alone with and close to Tamar.

13:10-12 The bedroom was normally the innermost room of the house and the least public. Sleep with me is literally “lie with me”—have intercourse. Three times Tamar urged her brother not to violate her. Doing such a thing was a serious offense in the law of Moses (Dt 22:25-29).

13:13-15 Tamar also insisted the crime would shame both her and her brother. Tamar then suggested that Amnon speak to the king about marrying her first. Her suggestion, however, may have been a means to escape the situation. The words Amnon hated Tamar show that his feelings toward his half sister had been nothing more than lust.

13:16-19 The Torah required a man who raped a virgin to pay her father a significant bride price, and he could never divorce her (Dt 22:28-29). The law protected women by warning men of the consequences of uncontrolled sexual urges. Amnon’s attempt to send Tamar away after he had assaulted her was much worse than the rape itself since it would ensure that her shame was permanent. Tamar’s actions were typical signs of mourning.

13:20 Absalom found Tamar and discovered Amnon had raped her. Be quiet for now meant Absalom wanted Tamar to refrain from revealing what happened until he could think of a way to help her. As a desolate woman, Tamar would probably not marry.

13:21-22 David was furious, but he apparently did nothing. The law required that Amnon and Tamar should marry since Amnon raped her (Dt 22:28-29), but it also prohibited sibling marriages (Lv 18:11). Thus this unusual case had no easy solution. David also may have feared challenging Amnon about Tamar because Amnon may have challenged him about his relationship with Bathsheba. Absalom, Tamar’s full brother, didn’t say anything to Amnon, either good or bad, choosing instead to wait for an opportunity for revenge.

13:23 Two years later was a long time, but Absalom had not forgotten Amnon's sin. Sheep-shearing was a time of celebration (1Sam 25:7-8), so Absalom invited all the king's sons to Baal-hazor about 14 miles north of Jerusalem.

13:26 Absalom's request for Amnon to come may have been veiled as something David should do—send the crown prince if the king himself could not come. David challenged Absalom's request in light of the tension that probably was obvious between him and Absalom.

13:27 After much discussion, David sent Amnon and all the king's sons. Maybe David sent the others along in hopes of keeping things peaceful between Absalom and Amnon.

13:28 The narrative shifts suddenly to Baal-hazor. Absalom commanded his young men to strike Amnon. He reassured them because they probably feared reprisal from David. Amnon commissioned his hit men with words similar to those God spoke to Joshua (Jos 1:9).

2 Samuel 14:1-24

14:1 Joab saw David's wounded heart, so he devised a plan to help heal the family and let David focus more on the matters of the kingdom.

14:4-8 The clever woman (v. 2) came to the king and acted as if she were seeking David's judgment on a matter. The woman's clan was attempting to execute justice and put her living son to death. However, if they killed the brother who killed his brother under extreme circumstances, they also would destroy the heir to the woman's estate, and her husband's family name would come to an end. David assured the woman that he would issue a command protecting her living son, but the woman's words in verses 9-11 suggest the matter was not settled in her mind.

14:9-12 The woman's words suggested she had put David in a difficult position to let a murderer go free, and she asked that any blame rest on her and her family. David further assured her that no one would trouble her any more. The woman persisted, asking David to invoke an oath before the Lord that her son would not die. David vowed that everything would be okay. The woman had received her judgment, but she broke protocol and requested a chance to speak a further word to the king—a request David granted.

14:13 The woman gently but precisely drew a parallel between her situation and David's. Her words the king... has pronounced his own guilt implied he was unwilling to give himself the same judgment. He was unwilling to restore Absalom, who had killed Amnon.

14:17 The woman's closing words were somewhat ambiguous in their application. Would the word of the king bring relief for her or for David? Her blessing, May the Lord your God be with you, may have hinted that just as the king could discern the good and the bad for others, perhaps with God's help he could discern for himself the wisest thing to do about Absalom.

14:21-22 Despite David's recognition of Joab's ploy, he asked his nephew to bring Absalom from Geshur. Joab appeared pleased to have played a part in beginning the reconciliation process between David and Absalom.

14:24 Ironically, David gave Absalom permission to return to his house, but he would not give Absalom an audience. David's "halfway" decision only inflamed the tension between himself and his son. ng David's forgiveness.