

Discussion Questions: February 25, 2018
Family Matters Part 2
2 Samuel 14:1-33



MAIN POINT

From the life of David, we learn a lesson in how not to parent.

INTRODUCTION

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

Did you ever try to run away when you were little? If so, what was your motivation, and how far did you get?

What is a character trait you share with one of your parents? Are you proud of that trait? Why or why not?

Family relationships give us some of our deepest bonds and are usually the relationships in which we feel the most love. However, they also create some of the biggest tensions and struggles we face, because these are the people we share living space and personality traits with, for better or worse. God has given us earthly families as a way for us to model His love and grace to the world, so it is important that we understand how to glorify Him in these relationships. In today's text, we will see a picture from the life of David of how not to parent, which also helps us understand what our relationships should look like.

UNDERSTANDING

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

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

From these verses, how would you describe David's home life? What issues is the family dealing with?

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. 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.

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 do we learn about his relationship with his children?

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. David lacked appropriate discipline as a father.

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 David's relationship with Absalom?

What do we learn about Absalom's character from this sequence of events? What do we learn about David's parenting?

When Absalom returned to Jerusalem, David refused to see or talk with his son. He was distant from his children. 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.

Have a volunteer read 2 Samuel 15:13-37.

How did Absalom feel about his father as a result of everything this family had been through?

What does David's response to the messenger reveal about his feelings toward Absalom (vv. 13-14)?

Despite the mistakes David made in his parenting, how did David demonstrate his faith in God in this scene?

In 2 Samuel 15:13, David received news that shook him to the core. He learned that his son, Absalom had declared war against him. David was forced to acknowledge that he would not be reconciled to his son and his kingdom had splintered. This experience forced David to acknowledge his weaknesses and surrender to the Lord. David's faith left room for the fact that God might have a different plan than his own. He said that even if God chose not to fulfill that promise in that way, he would still make himself available to the Lord to do as He pleased. Jesus lived in a similar way, praying for God to remove the

cross from Him but submitting Himself to God's will (Luke 22:42). Continuing to trust God means both seeing with faith and submitting to God's will.

APPLICATION

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

What are the warnings and key takeaways for us from the picture of David's home life in 2 Samuel 13–15?

While David gives us a picture of how not to act in relationships and as a parent, Jesus gives us a picture of how we are to act. What does the gospel teach us about healthy relationships?

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

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 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.

2 Samuel 15:13-37

15:13-18. David summoned his servants with him in Jerusalem and insisted they all needed to flee at once. He knew Absalom and his forces would head straight for the capital and attack it if necessary. David and his officials stopped at the last house (perhaps the house at the edge of Jerusalem), probably to get organized for their flight eastward. David's influence among the Philistines had gained him the loyalty of 600 men from Gath.

15:19-22. Ittai the Gittite was an exile from Philistia who had cast his lot with David, perhaps during David's flight from Saul (1Sam 18–31). David excused Ittai from accompanying him, but Ittai swore by the Lord and the king that he would stay with David whether it meant life or death for him. David's integrity still garnered respect.

15:23-29. The Kidron Valley skirted Jerusalem's eastern edge, separating the city from the Mount of Olives. Once David and his associates reached the top, they could travel the road that leads to the desert (lit "wilderness"), most likely the ascent of Adummim that connected Jerusalem with Jericho in the Jordan Valley. The ark of the covenant of God was probably brought to ensure God's presence and as a mark of David's legitimate right to reign. Zadok and Abiathar stood by the king who had endorsed their respective ministries and the ministries of the Levites (6:12-18). David determined that the ark of God properly belonged in Jerusalem, God's city. It would remain there, and it was up to God to either restore David to his throne in Jerusalem or not. The king was content to leave the matter in God's hands. David created a spy network that included Zadok, Abiathar, and their respective sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan. The fords of the wilderness were shallow places where the Jordan River could be crossed. Absalom would probably assume David's supporters had fled. He may not have suspected Zadok and Abiathar of siding with his father.

15:30-37. Covering the head and walking barefoot were signs of deep personal anguish. The news that Ahithophel had joined the conspirators with Absalom was a blow to David's cause. The king's prayer for God to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness was a prayer of great faith because Ahithophel's advice was taken to be like a word from the Lord (16:23). Hushai would end up being the answer to David's prayer (v. 31). Hushai's role was to counteract Ahithophel's counsel (no small task in light of 16:23) and to report everything to Zadok and Abiathar. Ahimaaz and Jonathan would then relay any information they received from their fathers directly to David. Hushai and Absalom arrived in Jerusalem at the same time. The decisive moment when Absalom had to choose between Hushai's counsel or Ahithophel's counsel is delayed by 16:1-14 and resumes at 16:15.