



**2 SAMUEL 13 - 14**  
**A KING IN PLACE OF THE KING**  
*Week 36 – Bitter Fruit in David’s Family*

**Introduction**

After David’s sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah her husband, God told David the serious consequences that would come upon him. The first would be conflict and turmoil within his own household (12:10). In fact, from this point forward in David’s life, almost all of his troubles and sadness arose from strife within his family.

Although David confessed his sin in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah, he did not have the kinds of vulnerable, open conversations about the impact of his sexual sins on everyone else. In particular, he should have had many honest, open conversations with his many sons as to the wreckage his own lack of restraint had caused, not only in regard to Bathsheba, but also in regard to the many wives that David had taken, contrary to God’s prohibition against multiplying wives (Deuteronomy 17:17).

He seemed to have very little concept of fatherly influence in the family. Had he done more in the way of correcting his own behavior, he might have had a stronger voice as the father of a very large clan.

## Amnon lusts after Tamar: 13:1-7

*“Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her” (13:1,2).*

According to Jewish law, Amnon could not marry his own half-sister (Leviticus 20:17). Yet, he lusted after her so much that he made himself sick. In like manner, David had desired a woman that was “off limits” (Bathsheba). He also had many wives and concubines. Had David set an example of restraint, he could have given guidance to his son. Instead, David’s example empowered Amnon to follow his sinful desires.

*“Can you imagine the confusing messages David’s children received as they grew up? They had siblings, half siblings, and siblings born to David’s concubines. They grew up in a household saturated by sexual excess and lacking any example of parental restraint. We can’t and must not excuse Amnon, but we can certainly understand.” (Beth Moore, A Heart Like His, p.198).*

Jonadab (son of David’s brother, thus cousin to Amnon) came up with a deceptive plan so that Amnon could get close to Tamar. He should pretend to be sick and ask his father David to send Tamar to be his nurse. David seemed to be unaware of the heart condition of his son(s). It was he who sent the order for Tamar to go to Amnon.

*Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, “Go now to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him” (13:7).*

Sadly, Tamar was walking into a trap set by 3 unsafe men: the lustful brother Amnon, the deceptive cousin Jonadab, and the out-of-touch father David.

Jonadab appears almost like a devil. He tempted Amnon to go ahead and ‘touch the forbidden fruit.’ A true friend would have warned Amnon to stay away from Tamar, and to fulfill his desires in the right way with a wife. Instead, Johadab encouraged Amnon to move toward the object of his lust.

### **Be careful WHO you listen to.**

There are many voices and advisors that will tell you to ‘just do it,’ to ‘have it your way,’ rather than encouraging you to honor God and walk in His ways. The advice of Jonadab the ‘friend’ would end up costing Amnon everything, including his life.

## Amnon rapes Tamar: 13:8-14

There is so much sadness in this narrative. Tamar was the lovely and obedient daughter of David. She did as she was commanded and baked cakes for the 'ailing' Amnon with her own hands, as he looked on. She brought the cakes to her brother as he lay on his sickbed. She was full of dignity, beauty, innocence and goodwill. Her brother, however, was filled with evil, lustful intent. **The name "Amnon" means "trustworthy."** Yet, this Amnon was anything but trustworthy.

As Amnon began to force himself upon Tamar, she appealed to his righteous sensibilities; but his lust would not be stopped:

*When she brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he raped her (13:11-14).*

Rape is an epidemic in America. Studies show that 1 out of 5 women have been victims of rape. 1 out of 4 young girls will be sexually abused before they turn 18.

What can we do?

- 1) Protect women and children from sexual abuse. We ALL must be active protectors of women and children. Men, in particular, should be highly alert and active protectors.
- 2) Women must exercise caution as to who they spend time with. Date rape and drug rape are on the rise. Do not allow yourself to be isolated by a stranger.
- 3) Report any act of sexual abuse to the authorities. 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police; and ONLY 12% of child sexual assaults are reported to police.
- 4) Heal from the damage of sexual abuse. Seek counseling that promotes emotional, psychological and spiritual healing. Do not allow another person's sin to become your burden for the rest of your life. It is possible to find healing and freedom.

## Amnon hates Tamar: 13:15-19

*Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up, go away!" But she said to him, "No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!" Yet he would not listen to her. Then he called his young man who attended him and said, "Now throw this woman out of my presence, and lock the door behind her" (13:15-17).*

No story in the Bible better illustrates the difference between lust and love. The moment that Amnon's sexual lust was satisfied, he "hated" Tamar and wanted nothing more to do with her. Why? Because lust is never satisfied. By tomorrow, Amnon will want someone else and something more to satisfy his lustful cravings. As the apostle Paul wrote: *"Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more"* (Ephesians 4:19). Lust always has you grasping for just a little bit more.

Judith Orloff, M.D. describes the difference between love and lust (Psychology Today, Aug.15,2011).

**Lust:** You're totally focused on a person's looks and body. You're interested in having sex, but not in having conversations. You'd rather keep the relationship on a fantasy level, not discuss real feelings. You want to leave soon after sex rather than cuddling. You are lovers, but not friends.

**Love:** You want to spend quality time together other Love: than sex. You get lost in conversations and forget about the hours passing. You want to honestly listen to each other's feelings, make each other happy. He or she motivates you to be a better person. You want to meet his or her family and friends.

An excellent book dealing with love and lust is: Joshua Harris, ***Sex is not the Problem – Lust Is*** (Multnomah Books, 2003). This is a very practical book for all ages. I highly recommend it!

## **Tamar's devastation: 13:18-22**

Tamar tried to appeal to any vestiges of goodness in her brother; but he was hopelessly and recklessly self-centered. He had her forcibly thrown out of his room, and the door locked behind her. Tamar tore her virgin's garment, put ashes on her head and went out from Amnon's presence wailing. Immediately, her blood brother Absalom asked a question that seems to indicate his suspicion that something like this could have happened:

*Then Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart." So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom's house (13:20).*

Absalom, on the surface, appears like the protective brother. Yet, he did little to protect and/or heal his sister: 1) He seems to have suspected that Amnon presented a threat to her, but he did nothing about it. 2) He told her to "keep silent" about the rape. 3) He seemed to prefer Amnon's right over hers – "He is your brother." 4) He told her to not take it to heart (seriously?). 5) He allowed her to "remain desolate" in his house. 6) He was more concerned with his own revenge than with his sister's healing.

A true 'healer' sets aside personal agendas in order to fully enter into the suffering of another. He/she listens at a heart and soul level to what the sufferer is thinking and feeling. We must resist the temptation to offer advice and quick fixes. Empathy is entering into another person's suffering and helping them to process their own pain. The sufferer needs to feel heard and understood.

## **David's anger/Absalom's hatred: 13:21,22**

*"Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry. But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar" (13:21,22).*

Both David and Absalom remained silent about this tragic incident. David displayed anger; but he did nothing about it. He did not call his own firstborn son to account for this atrocious act, likely because he felt like a hypocrite (his own sin of adultery and murder was worse). David was compromised in his ability to "father" his sons because of his own past behavior (not to mention the present fact that he continued to have numerous wives and concubines).

Absalom remained silent for another reason. From the moment this happened, he was looking for a way to kill Amnon. The murder did not take place for 2 full years; but murder was lurking in his heart the entire time. Jesus spoke clearly about how anger is the breeding ground and basis for murder (Matthew 5:21,22).

Aside from the fallout in our own lives, we need to realize that our leadership of others will be compromised by our sin. It is very difficult to lead others with credibility and conviction when our own lives have been marked by compromise. This is especially true in the area of sexuality. If parents and other role models are indulging, this gives sons and daughters every reason to do the same. David was not only compromised as a father, he also had failed to take corrective steps that could have restored his ability to act as a father to a large clan of sons and daughters. Because he failed to do so, the chaos in his household increased over time.

## **Absalom murders Amnon: 13:23-39**

It took 2 full years, but eventually Absalom managed to lure Amnon away to a feast, where he had him assassinated. How ironic: David had instructed his men to dispense with Uriah. Now, Absalom commands his men to dispense with Amnon. Like father like son. At first, David was told that all of his sons had been killed by Absalom.

Ironically, it was Jonadab (who had advised Amnon at the outset) who told David that only Amnon had died: *Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar" (13:32).*

Jonadab apparently knew all along that Absalom was intending to murder Amnon; but he did nothing to dissuade him. Again, Jonadab appears much like a devil in this story: He lures a man into sin, does nothing to help him deal with the ugly consequences, and then matter-of-factly reports his death.

After killing Amnon, Absalom fled to Talmai, King of Geshur, who was his grandfather (2Samuel 3:3). He was there for the next 3 years, alienated from his father and from the kingdom of Israel. Thus, 5 years elapsed during which David lost 2 sons and 1 daughter: Amnon was dead, Absalom was departed, and Tamar was desolate. As God had said, the sword had arisen in David's household (12:10) and he was experiencing the bitter fruit of his own sinful choices.

When I was in a high school driver education class, they showed us a movie entitled, **Death on the Highway**. It was intended to scare us away from drinking and driving by graphically showing accident scenes where policemen were putting bodies in body bags. The message was clear and unforgettable: If you drink and drive, you might end up like this. Similarly, the Bible paints a graphic and disturbing picture of the fallout of David's sins in his family life. This was to serve as a warning to all of us: If you choose to indulge your lusts as David did, you might end up like this. It is GOOD for some scary pictures to remain firmly lodged in our heads and hearts!

## Joab moves David's heart to bring Absalom back: 14:1-20

Joab saw that David's heart was inclined toward Absalom (14:1), but that he was not moving toward reconciliation. He cleverly used a woman from another city to present a "case" to David that closely resembled the Amnon-Absalom situation. She told David that one of her sons had killed the other son, and that now the rest of her family wanted to execute her one remaining son, thus extinguishing her hope for an heir to carry on the family name.

David promised her that he would protect the life of the remaining son and not allow him to be put to death. The woman then began to press David as to why he was not moving to protect the life of his own son, allowing him instead to remain banished to a far off land (a 'death-sentence' in effect). David quickly perceived that Joab was behind this entire conversation, and the woman confirmed that it was so.

*"Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant; in order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing" (14:19,20).*

Joab brings Absalom back to Jerusalem: 14:21-24 David called Joab in and gave him permission to go to Geshur and bring Absalom home. Joab was delighted for this opportunity, fully expecting that David would meet with him. However, when Absalom came back Jerusalem David made another relationally unhealthy move.

*The king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face (14:24).*

What a terrible way to deal with an estranged son. Instead of making things better, David's actions made matters much worse. Absalom felt even further estranged from his father because he was physically present with him in the same town; but emotionally abandoned by him. This continued estrangement lasted 2 more years, leading to dire consequences for this father and son.

A relational rupture cannot be patched over with half-hearted measures. It takes time, honest communication and emotional healing to bring about a true reconciliation of wounded souls. When you do something half-hearted, it makes the other person feel like you are just doing what suits you, rather than truly seeking to understand and heal the relationship. Such measures just drive the wound in even deeper as the perceived message becomes a reality: "I don't really matter to this person; they will always seek to control this relationship in a way that serves them." On the other hand, when you move toward another person seeking to understand, not to be understood . . . the healing process can begin. David could have brought Absalom home, confessed his own sins to his son and then taken a listening position: *"Tell me my son how my actions have impacted you. I really want to understand."* He also could have honored Tamar's desire for righteousness, and invited he to dine at his table (as he had done with Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth).

## Absalom demands to see David: 14:25-33

After 2 more years of waiting, Absalom was fed up with his father's ways. He demanded that Joab pave the way for him to see David. Joab, however, ignored his requests. Absalom then showed how serious he was by burning Joab's field down! Finally, Joab persuaded David to allow Absalom to see him.

*"Thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom" (14:33).*

On the surface, it appeared that reconciliation had been made. On the contrary, too much time had passed and too much emotional damage had been incurred. Absalom was a very bitter son. His father had failed to act with justice in the case of Amnon's rape of Tamar. Absalom was forced to take matters into his own hands. Then, he was forced to flee to a safe haven for 3 years. Again, he was forced to remain separate from his father, while living in Jerusalem with him. Finally, he had to force his way back into his father's presence.

With all of that buried bitterness between son and father, it is not surprising to find, in the coming chapters, that Absalom was the one who ultimately fulfilled God's earlier words of judgment over David's future:

*"Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun" (12:11,12).*

As Absalom bowed before his father and felt his kiss on his cheek, he was already thinking in his heart that David was not only an unhealthy father, but also an unworthy king.

Nothing challenges us to maturity more than having younger people following in our footsteps. **"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1Corinthians 11:1)**. How do those under your leadership perceive you? Have you set them up for bitterness and rebellion because you have acted inconsistently? Or, are you seeking to live with "integrity" – integrating what you teach with what you model in your attitudes, words and behaviors.