

2 Samuel 13
October 22, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What are common problems that create conflict in families? And why might such conflicts continue for years without resolution? [Let people engage]

Transition:

Sooner than 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. David's family was no different! David's son, Amnon rapes his half-sister, Tamar. She tries to resolve this sin by encouraging Amnon to seek David's blessing to marry her, but he refuses. Absalom "resolves the conflict" in absolutely the wrong way by murdering Amnon two years later. In the meantime, David learns of the rape soon after it happened and is furious, yet he doesn't confront Amnon at all! Maybe because he committed adultery with Bathsheba, he didn't feel he could confront Amnon. Who knows?! But this family is messed up, just like ours can as well. Let's read the text and see what we should learn from it.

BOOK:

Amnon and Tamar

13 In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.

² Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

³ Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. ⁴ He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?"

Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

⁵ "Go to bed and pretend to be ill," Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.'"

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand."

⁷ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him." ⁸ So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. ⁹ Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.

"Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. ¹¹ But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister."

¹² "Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. ¹³ What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And

what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.”¹⁴ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, “Get up and get out!”

¹⁶ “No!” she said to him. “Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.”

But he refused to listen to her.¹⁷ He called his personal servant and said, “Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her.”¹⁸ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing a richly ornamented robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

²⁰ Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman.

²¹ When King David heard all this, he was furious.²² Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.

Absalom Kills Amnon

²³ Two years later, when Absalom’s sheepshearers were at Baal Hazor near the border of Ephraim, he invited all the king’s sons to come there.²⁴ Absalom went to the king and said, “Your servant has had shearers come. Will the king and his officials please join me?”

²⁵ “No, my son,” the king replied. “All of us should not go; we would only be a burden to you.” Although Absalom urged him, he still refused to go, but gave him his blessing.

²⁶ Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon come with us.”

The king asked him, “Why should he go with you?”²⁷ But Absalom urged him, so he sent with him Amnon and the rest of the king’s sons.

²⁸ Absalom ordered his men, “Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon down,’ then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Have not I given you this order? Be strong and brave.”²⁹ So Absalom’s men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king’s sons got up, mounted their mules and fled.

³⁰ While they were on their way, the report came to David: “Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons; not one of them is left.”³¹ The king stood up, tore his clothes and lay down on the ground; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn.

³² But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother, said, “My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom’s expressed intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar.³³ My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king’s sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead.”

³⁴ Meanwhile, Absalom had fled.

Now the man standing watch looked up and saw many people on the road west of him, coming down the side of the hill. The watchman went and told the king, “I see men in the direction of Horonaim, on the side of the hill.”

³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, “See, the king’s sons are here; it has happened just as your servant said.”

³⁶ As he finished speaking, the king’s sons came in, wailing loudly. The king, too, and all his servants wept very bitterly.

³⁷ Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. But King David mourned for his son every day.

³⁸ After Absalom fled and went to Geshur, he stayed there three years. ³⁹ And the spirit of the king longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

One of the key lessons we learn from the life of David is that the consequences of sin are real. No one gets away with sin. Sin destroys lives, relationships, and families. We learn that immorality creates dysfunction in families. The good news is that when we return to the Lord with a humble, repentant heart, He forgives us! The grace of God always offers hope and healing.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 469) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

C. Sin and murder of Amnon (chap. 13)

Because of his affair with Bathsheba David had been told by Nathan the prophet that the sword would never depart from his house (12:10). It was not long before he began to experience the heartbreaks of rape and murder within his own family.

13:1–6. **Absalom, son of David** by his wife Maacah (3:3), had a **beautiful sister** named **Tamar**. **Amnon**, David's firstborn by Ahinoam (3:2), **fell in love with Tamar**. **Frustrated** in his attempts to win her favor, **Amnon** sought the counsel of his **shrewd** cousin **Jonadab**. **Jonadab** advised **Amnon** to **pretend to be ill** and then to plead with his **father** to have **Tamar** bake him **bread** and bring it to him.

13:7–14. After **she** had prepared **the bread** before him, **Amnon** told her to dismiss all the servants. Then, despite her urgent pleading, **he grabbed her** and **raped her**. Such loss of a maiden's virginity was an unbearable curse **in Israel** (Deut. 22:13–21). Moreover, such relationships between half brothers and sisters were strictly forbidden in the Law. Those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the covenant community (Lev. 20:17). In this case, of course, **Tamar** was innocent since she had been assaulted (Deut. 22:25–29).

13:15–19. In revulsion at what he had done, **Amnon** now **hated Tamar more than he had** previously **loved her**. This indicates, of course, that his original feelings had not been love but only lust. To add insult to injury and in further violation of the Law, **Amnon** sent Tamar away. This suggests not only his desire to have her gone from his immediate presence but also his repudiation of her as a bride. He had humbled a **virgin** and the Law demanded that he marry her (Deut. 22:29). Tamar's reaction to all this—putting **ashes on her head** and tearing her royal robe (cf. 2 Sam. 13:31; Job 2:12)—shows the intensity of her sorrow at losing her purity and perhaps any further opportunity for marriage.

13:20–22. When **Tamar** got to the house of **her brother Absalom**, he suspected at once what had happened. No doubt he knew full well the propensities of **Amnon**. With plans for vengeance already developing in his own mind he counseled his **sister** to remain silent about the matter and to stay in his **house**. **David** somehow **heard** what had happened, and though **he was furious** he did not invoke the penalty prescribed by the Law. Perhaps this was because **Amnon** was his oldest son. But **Absalom ... hated Amnon**.

13:23–29. **Two long years** passed before **Absalom** effected his plan for retaliation. He hosted a festival to celebrate the time of sheepshearing, a custom observed in Israel from earliest times (Gen. 38:12–13; 1 Sam. 25:2, 8). **He invited** and **urged** his father David to **join** him at **Baal Hazor** (about six miles south of Shiloh), the scene of the festivities, but David declined. **Absalom** then requested that **Amnon** attend in David's place, a request **the king** reluctantly granted. In the midst of the merriment the servants of **Absalom**, on a prearranged signal, attacked and murdered the unsuspecting **Amnon**. Thus, a murder avenged a rape.

13:30–39. Having heard that **Absalom** had slain **all** of his other **sons ... David** fell into inconsolable anguish. Even when he later knew that the report was unfounded and that **only Amnon** was **dead** he could not be comforted (v. 36). **Absalom** meanwhile **fled** from Baal Hazor and sought and found refuge with **Talmi**, his maternal grandfather, at **Geshur**, east of the Sea of Kinnereth. There **Absalom** remained for **three years** though his father, finally consoled, **longed to** have him return again.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 128). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Absalom Murders Amnon (13:1–39). Although God forgave David, the consequences of his sin were immediately seen in his household. Just as David had lusted for Bathsheba, Amnon, the king's eldest son, desired his half-sister Tamar. He lured Tamar into his private quarters and raped her. However, his guilt was too great for his conscience, and he despised her afterward. He dismissed her, and she took refuge in the house of Absalom, her brother.

David, like Eli and Samuel, had no control over his sons. Absalom harbored his hatred for Amnon for two years until an occasion arose to kill him. Absalom held a festival attended by Amnon. At the command, Absalom's servants murdered Amnon. Absalom fled to Geshur where he took refuge with his maternal grandfather, Talmi, the king of Geshur. David wept for his son Amnon, who was special to the king as his eldest and successor to the throne. Yet he longed to see Absalom for the three years they were estranged.

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 2 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 186-187). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Amnon's Sin against Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1–39)

The passage—Amnon was the oldest of the sons of David. The record of his character may be given to show why he was not chosen as successor to David. The unfolding history also reveals the weaknesses of Absalom and Adonijah. It was Solomon who was clearly God's choice.

Absalom and Tamar were children of David by his wife Maacah. Polygamy was an accepted social arrangement in those days, but its evil consequences revealed it not to be the will of God for his people. Children of the same father were not supposed to marry (Lev. 18:9). This and other of God's laws were often broken, always with serious consequences.

Amnon made himself sick by his overwhelming sexual desire toward his half-sister Tamar. He shared the knowledge of his lust with his cousin Jonadab. He gave Amnon the scheme he used to bring about the rape of his half-sister.

Amnon pretended illness and when David inquired about him, he asked for Tamar to wait upon him. David granted the request. Tamar prepared food for him and at his request was feeding him out of her own hands as he lay on the bed. He seized her and raped her. Verse 15 declares that he then hated her with a passion greater than the lust with which he had sought to rape her. He had her forcefully ejected from his house. She went away crying aloud.

Absalom took Tamar to his home and waited for an opportunity for revenge. David heard of the ugly situation and was very angry. He could not have escaped remembering the similarity of this sin to his own.

Two years later Absalom made a feast and invited all the king's sons. He also invited David. David did not go, but Absalom pressed him to insist that Amnon go. While Amnon was drinking at the feast Absalom commanded his servants to kill him. At first the news came to David that Absalom had killed all of his sons, but later he heard it was only Amnon who had been murdered. Absalom fled into exile.

Truth for today—In these days of sexual permissiveness, stories like those of David and Bathsheba and Amnon and Tamar are being reenacted with alarming regularity. The circumstances may vary, but the results are always the same—guilt, shame, hatred, and death.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.