

BIBLE STUDY ON GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE:



2 SAMUEL 13. 1-22

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CREATING A BRAVE SPACE

PREFACE

The Bible addresses a range of difficult subjects, and we are called to learn from these passages as much as any others. **God has no taboos!**

However, the facilitator of such discussions needs to create an empathetic atmosphere, remaining sensitive to the individual experiences and backgrounds of those present. This is by no means a comprehensive guide, and we encourage further research into the topic for any who wish to know more.

In general, we suggest you reassure those present that **their words will not leave the table without explicit permission.** Encourage them to share as much or as little as they wish to.

Furthermore, it is important to **explicitly address the topic at hand, so that individuals are aware of what will be mentioned.** (Say, “this story addresses topics of violence, distress and rape. I would rather you know this in advance.”) Do not simply throw out a list of triggering topics without the given context, as it might simply serve to disturb those present rather than reassure them.

In all things, pray. Pray for past wounds, pray for courage to have hard conversations, and pray for those who suffer.

2 SAMUEL 13: 1-22 (NIV)

TAMAR



11 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 so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

3 Now Amnon had an adviser 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."

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7 David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him."

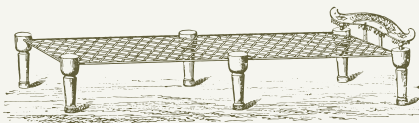
8 So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. 9 Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat. "Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him. 10 Then Amnon said 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 "No, 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.



2 SAMUEL 13. 1-22

17 He called his personal servant and said, "Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her." 18 So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate 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 ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands 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 for 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 And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.



DEFINING GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE

The European Commission defines Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as:

“Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.”

It can include violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit. Although women and girls are the main victims of GBV, it also causes severe harm to families and communities.

Violence against women is considered a violation of human rights, including a form of discrimination against women, which means all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in: physical harm, sexual harm, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women.



AMNON

Son of King David and brother of Tamar

TAMAR

Sister of Amnon and Absalom

ABSALOM

Another son of King David

JONADAB

Counsellor and friend of Amnon
Nephew of King David

KING DAVID

Father of Amnon, Absalom and Tamar

UNNAMED SERVANT

Amnon's personal servant (male)

MAJOR CHARACTERS

STORY OF TAMAR

A SUMMARY



Amnon was in love with his half-sister, Tamar. He was so obsessed with her that he became sick. Amnon had an adviser friend called Jonadab . He was a very “crafty man”. He told Amnon to pretend to be sick, and when his father comes to see him, to request that his sister Tamar come and give him something to eat, as an excuse to see her.

Amnon did as his friend advised him, and King David sent Tamar to Amnon’s house according to his request.

When Tamar arrived to make him bread, Amnon seized his opportunity and raped her.

(Read verses 12 to 14.)

After raping her, Amnon hated Tamar very much, more than he had “loved” her before. She begged him not to send her away (with the shame he’d brought unto her) but he refused to listen to her and kicked her out.

She then put ashes on her head and tore the beautiful robe she was wearing. She “went away, weeping loudly.”

THE STORY OF TAMAR

A SUMMARY CONT'D

Her brother Absalom said, “has Amnon, that brother of yours, forced you to go to bed with him? My sister don’t let it upset you.” After that, Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house. “She was very lonely.” (verse 20).

King David heard about everything that had happened, and became angry. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, but he hated him for the shame he brought on his sister.

Aftermath:

In verses 28-33, Absalom kills Amnon out of vengeance. The story ends in abject violence, with King David in a state of utter sadness “weeping bitterly.” (verses 36-38)

Several years later, Absalom conspires against his father, King David, despite an attempt on David’s part at reconciliation. After several battles, Absalom is killed, and David once more is devastated at the loss of a son, “Oh Absalom my son! If only I had died instead of you!” (2 Samuel 18)

1. WHY DO YOU THINK WE CHOSE THIS STORY? BASED ON WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AS MENTIONNED IN THE BEGINNING OF THIS BIBLE STUDY, WHAT ISSUES ARE PRESENT IN THIS STORY?



2. WHAT ROLE DID WOMEN PLAY IN THIS STORY? WHERE ARE HER MOTHER, SISTERS OR FEMALE FRIENDS?



3. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EMOTIONS OR WORDS EXPRESSED BY TAMAR?



4. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF DAVID'S REACTION? WHAT ABOUT ABSALOM'S REACTION?



DISCUSSION

5. DID ANYONE ASK TAMAR
WHAT SHE WANTED? WHAT DO
YOU THINK SHE WOULD HAVE
REPLIED?

————— ♦ —————

6. WHO BENEFITED FROM
AMNON'S MURDER?

————— ♦ —————

7. HOW DOES THE PERSON OF
JESUS AND HIS RESPONSE TO
VIOLENCE CONTRAST THE END
OF THIS STORY?

————— ♦ —————

8. THERE ARE THREE THEMES WE
CAN EXPLORE IN THIS STORY:
LOVE, SHAME AND JUSTICE.
MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE NEXT
SECTIONS TO CONTINUE OUR
REFLECTIONS !



DISCUSSION
CONT'D

REFLECTION

Why the story of Tamar ?

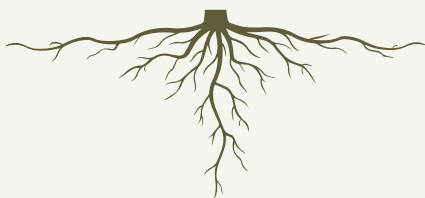
The story of Tamar in 2 Samuel recounts the individual sins (those of Amnon, Jonadab) committed against a woman. It also describes certain systems (family or social systems) that entrapped Tamar in a moment of vulnerability, changing the course of her life.

Even if the punishment of Amnon brought a certain measure of justice to those around Tamar, she herself was denied a voice in the decision process, despite being **the primary victim**.

To truly confront the violence like that which was inflicted on Tamar, we need to examine the systemic structures that create, maintain and reinforce such environments.

It is not enough to simply respond to the immediate consequences of a problem if its roots and causes are not examined and remain unchanged.

Consider the analogy of a tree: if its roots are diseased, merely tending to the visible parts (i.e. picking rotten fruit or cutting dead branches) will not prevent the issue from recurring. Even after the tree is cut down, its roots, leaves and branches continue to impact the ecosystem. Thus, the mere act of cutting down the tree does not fully resolve the problem.



REFLECTION CONT'D

Why the story of Tamar ?

Likewise, simply punishing an abuser without addressing systemic issues that allowed the abuse to occur in the first place does little to aid in the long run.

In the case of Tamar, her predator was killed, but she remained in a state of shame, distress and solitude.

Tamar needed the justice, mercy and love of God! Obviously, justice for her predator; AND **healing and restoration over her own person.** Jesus Christ exercised a completely different posture when it came to victims and sinners than the one demonstrated by the characters in Tamar's story.

Tamar wasn't protected by her family, by the social mores or the systems of her time. There needed a correction of these ills in order to protect the vulnerable - women and children. In identifying and confronting the problems in our present day systems we can create a society where people like Tamar will no longer be put in situations that will endanger them.

And most importantly, we need the person and the work of Jesus Christ.



MAJOR THEMES

LOVE



Think about the claim that Amnon loves Tamar and read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6.

- What is Biblical love? Does Amnon express the type of love exhibited in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6?
- Can violent abuse trace its foundation to love? What does violence express?

Love is

Love resists

Patience (is patient)	Envy (isn't envious)
Kindness (is kind)	Boasting (isn't boastful)
Truth (rejoices with the truth)	Arrogance (isn't arrogant)
Resilience (bears all things)	Rudeness (isn't rude)
Faith (believes all things)	Selfishness (doesn't insist on its own way)
Hope (hopes all things)	Anger (isn't irritable)
Endurance (endures all things)	Resentment (isn't resentful)
Perseverance (never fails)	Wrongdoing (doesn't rejoice in wrongdoing)

MAJOR THEMES

SHAME

Reflect on the following verses:



- "And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel..." (verse 13).
- "After that, Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house. She was very lonely." (verse 20).
- Tamar committed no crime, yet felt ashamed. This is common in victims. Why do you think this the case?
- If Tamar were your friend, what would you say to her?

MAJOR THEMES

JUSTICE

With the assumed concept of justice (Absalom killing Amnon), reflect and then think about this part of the story:

- So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me.” (verse 16).
- What do you think justice would have looked like for Tamar?
- What do you think about Tamar’s request to marry Amnon? Is this God’s justice?
- Find a verse about justice. How does God define justice?



PRAYER

We ask that God may grant us peace.
That in our pain we may find comfort,
That in our confusion we may find a measure of
understanding,
That in our anger we may find forgiveness,
That in our sorrow we may find hope,
That in the aftermath of fear we may find strength and
healing.

Come, Holy Spirit and baptize us again in the sea of your
love, where we release our useless fears and relax into your
mercy. Inside this new love we die to all that is false. By
your power made perfect in weakness, awaken us to the
mystery of life and speak to us again in the truth of our
deepest identity hidden in you. "You are my child whom I
love with you I am well pleased."

PRAYER FOR SURVIVORS

Christ be with you, Christ within you,
Christ behind you, Christ before you,
Christ beside you, Christ to win you,
Christ to comfort and restore you,
Christ beneath you, Christ above you,
Christ in quiet and in danger,
Christ in hearts of those who love you,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
Amen.

Resource : Street Psalms, « Moment of Blessing: Occasion of Assault »,
www.streetpsalms.org

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QUESTIONS? NEED HELP ?

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