



The Gift of Grace: David and Mephibosheth (2 Sam 13-14)

Notes: Week Seven

2 Samuel 13-14 (HCSB)

Amnon Rapes Tamar

13 Some time passed. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and David's son Amnon was infatuated with her. ² Amnon was frustrated to the point of making himself sick over his sister Tamar because she was a virgin, but it seemed impossible to do anything to her. ³ Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, a son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab was a very shrewd man, ⁴ and he asked Amnon, "Why are you, the king's son, so miserable every morning? Won't you tell me?"

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

⁵ Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend you're sick. When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare food in my presence so I can watch and eat from her hand.'"

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my presence so I can eat from her hand."

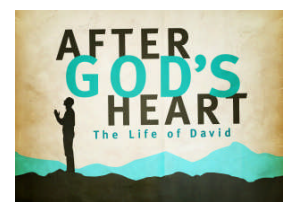
⁷ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Please go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare a meal for him."

⁸ Then Tamar went to his house while Amnon was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his presence, and baked them. ⁹ She brought the pan and set it down in front of him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Everyone leave me!" And everyone left him. ¹⁰ "Bring the meal to the bedroom," Amnon told Tamar, "so I can eat from your hand." Tamar took the cakes she had made and went to her brother Amnon's bedroom. ¹¹ When she brought them to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, ^[a] "Come sleep with me, my sister!"

¹² "Don't, my brother!" she cried. "Don't humiliate me, for such a thing should never be done in Israel. Don't do this horrible thing! ¹³ Where could I ever go with my disgrace? And you—you would be like one of the immoral men in Israel! Please, speak to the king, for he won't keep me from you." ¹⁴ But he refused to listen to her, and because he was stronger than she was, he raped her.

¹⁵ After this, Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that the hatred he hated her with was greater than the love he had loved her with. "Get out of here!" he said.

¹⁶ "No," she cried, ^[b] "sending me away is much worse than the great wrong you've already done to me!" But he refused to listen to her. ¹⁷ Instead, he called to the servant who waited on him: "Throw this woman out and bolt the door behind her!" ¹⁸ Amnon's servant threw her out and bolted the door behind her. Now Tamar was wearing a long-sleeved ^[c] garment, because this is what the king's virgin daughters wore. ¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long-sleeved garment she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away crying out.



²⁰ Her brother Absalom said to her: “Has your brother Amnon been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister. He is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” So Tamar lived as a desolate woman in the house of her brother Absalom.

Absalom Murders Amnon

²¹ When King David heard about all these things, he was furious.^[d] ²² Absalom didn’t say anything to Amnon, either good or bad, because he hated Amnon since he disgraced his sister Tamar.

²³ Two years later, Absalom’s sheepshearers were at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king’s sons. ²⁴ Then he went to the king and said, “Your servant has just hired sheepshearers. Will the king and his servants please come with your servant?”

²⁵ The king replied to Absalom, “No, my son, we should not all go, or we would be a burden to you.” Although Absalom urged him, he wasn’t willing to go, though he did bless him.

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

The king asked him, “Why should he go with you?” ²⁷ But Absalom urged him, so he sent Amnon and all the king’s sons.^[e]

²⁸ Now Absalom commanded his young men, “Watch Amnon until he is in a good mood from the wine. When I order you to strike Amnon, then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Am I not the one who has commanded you? Be strong and courageous!” ²⁹ So Absalom’s young men did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the rest of the king’s sons got up, and each fled on his mule.

³⁰ While they were on the way, a report reached David: “Absalom struck down all the king’s sons; not even one of them survived!” ³¹ In response 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 David’s brother Shimeah, spoke up: “My lord must not think they have killed all the young men, the king’s sons, because only Amnon is dead. In fact, Absalom has planned this^[f] ever since the day Amnon disgraced his sister Tamar. ³³ So now, my lord the king, don’t take seriously the report that says all the king’s sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead.”

³⁴ Meanwhile, Absalom had fled. When the young man who was standing watch looked up, there were many people coming from the road west of him from the side of the mountain.^[g] ³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, “Look, the king’s sons have come! It’s exactly like your servant said.” ³⁶ Just as he finished speaking, the king’s sons entered and wept loudly. Then the king and all his servants also wept bitterly.

³⁷ Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son^[h] every day. ³⁸ Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur where he stayed three years. ³⁹ Then King David^[i] longed to go to Absalom, for David had finished grieving over Amnon’s death.

Absalom Restored to David

14 Joab son of Zeruah observed that the king’s mind was on Absalom. ² So Joab sent someone to Tekoa to bring a clever woman from there. He told her, “Pretend to be in mourning: dress in mourning clothes and don’t put on any oil. Act like a woman who has been mourning for the dead for a long time. ³ Go to the king and speak these words to him.” Then Joab told her exactly what to say.

⁴ When the woman from Tekoa came^[j] to the king, she fell with her face to the ground in homage and said, “Help me, my king!”

⁵ “What’s the matter?” the king asked her.

“To tell the truth, I am a widow; my husband died,” she said. ⁶ “Your servant had two sons. They were fighting in the field with no one to separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. ⁷ Now the

whole clan has risen up against your servant and said, ‘Hand over the one who killed his brother so we may put him to death for the life of the brother he murdered. We will destroy the heir!’ They would extinguish my one remaining ember by not preserving my husband’s name or posterity on earth.”

⁸ The king told the woman, “Go home. I will issue a command on your behalf.”

⁹ Then the woman of Tekoa said to the king, “My lord the king, may any blame be on me and my father’s house, and may the king and his throne be innocent.”

¹⁰ “Whoever speaks to you,” the king said, “bring him to me. He will not trouble you again!”

¹¹ She replied, “Please, may the king invoke the LORD your God, so that the avenger of blood will not increase the loss, and they will not eliminate my son!”

“As the LORD lives,” he vowed, “not a hair of your son will fall to the ground.”

¹² Then the woman said, “Please, may your servant speak a word to my lord the king?”

“Speak,” he replied.

¹³ The woman asked, “Why have you devised something similar against the people of God? When the king spoke as he did about this matter, he has pronounced his own guilt. The king has not brought back his own banished one.¹⁴ We will certainly die and be like water poured out on the ground, which can’t be recovered. But God would not take away a life; He would devise plans so that the one banished from Him does not remain banished.

¹⁵ “Now therefore, I’ve come to present this matter to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought: I must speak to the king. Perhaps the king will grant his servant’s request.¹⁶ The king will surely listen in order to rescue his servant from the hand of this man who would eliminate both me and my son from God’s inheritance.¹⁷ Your servant thought: May the word of my lord the king bring relief, for my lord the king is able to discern the good and the bad like the Angel of God. May the LORD your God be with you.”

¹⁸ Then the king answered the woman, “I’m going to ask you something; don’t conceal it from me!”

“Let my lord the king speak,” the woman replied.

¹⁹ The king asked, “Did Joab put you up to ^[k] all this?”

The woman answered. “As you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or left from all my lord the king says. Yes, your servant Joab is the one who gave orders to me; he told your servant exactly what to say.²⁰ Joab your servant has done this to address the issue indirectly,^[l] but my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the Angel of God, knowing everything on earth.”

²¹ Then the king said to Joab, “I hereby grant this request. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.”

²² Joab fell with his face to the ground in homage and praised the king. “Today,” Joab said, “your servant knows I have found favor with you, my lord the king, because the king has granted the request of your servant.”

²³ So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.²⁴ However, the king added, “He may return to his house, but he may not see my face.” So Absalom returned to his house, but he did not see the king.^[m]

²⁵ No man in all Israel was as handsome and highly praised as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw.²⁶ When he shaved his head—he shaved it every year because his hair got so heavy for him that he had to shave it off—he would weigh the hair from his head and it would be five pounds^[n] according to the royal standard.

²⁷ Three sons were born to Absalom, and a daughter named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman. ²⁸ Absalom resided in Jerusalem two years but never saw the king. ²⁹ Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab was unwilling to come. So he sent again, a second time, but he still wouldn't come. ³⁰ Then Absalom said to his servants, "See, Joab has a field right next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set fire to it!" So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.^[o]

³¹ Then Joab came to Absalom's house and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?"

³² "Look," Absalom explained to Joab, "I sent for you and said, 'Come here. I want to send you to the king to ask: Why have I come back from Geshur? I'd be better off if I were still there.' So now, let me see the king. If I am guilty, let him kill me."

³³ Joab went to the king and told him. So David summoned Absalom, who came to the king and bowed down with his face to the ground before him. Then the king kissed Absalom.

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Samuel 13:11](#) Lit *said to her*
- b. [2 Samuel 13:16](#) Lit *she said to him*
- c. [2 Samuel 13:18](#) Or *an ornamented*; Gn 37:3
- d. [2 Samuel 13:21](#) LXX, DSS add *but he did not grieve the spirit of Amnon his son, for he loved him because he was his firstborn*; 1Kg 1:6
- e. [2 Samuel 13:27](#) LXX adds *And Absalom prepared a feast like a royal feast.*
- f. [2 Samuel 13:32](#) Lit *In fact, it was established on the mouth of Absalom*
- g. [2 Samuel 13:34](#) LXX adds *And the watchman came and reported to the king saying, "I see men on the Horonaim road on the side of the mountain."*
- h. [2 Samuel 13:37](#) Probably Amnon
- i. [2 Samuel 13:39](#) DSS, LXX, Tg read *David's spirit*
- j. [2 Samuel 14:4](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Tg, Vg; other Hb mss read *spoke*
- k. [2 Samuel 14:19](#) Lit *Is the hand of Joab in*
- l. [2 Samuel 14:20](#) Lit *to go around the face of the matter*
- m. [2 Samuel 14:24](#) Lit *king's face*
- n. [2 Samuel 14:26](#) Lit *200 shekels*
- o. [2 Samuel 14:30](#) DSS, LXX add *So Joab's servants came to him with their clothes torn and said, "Absalom's servants have set the field on fire!"*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

2 Samuel 13-14

2 Samuel 13

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 the present translation is better because Amnon's actions toward Tamar show that he never really loved her.

13:2 Amnon was frustrated because he wanted Tamar for his wife, but he could not marry his half sister ([Lv 18:11](#); [20:17](#)).

13:3 Jonadab was Amnon's friend and cousin. Shrewd is literally "wise," but Jonadab's wisdom was clearly not used for godly means.

13:4 On in love with, see note at [verse 1](#).

13:5 Jonadab devised a plan by which Amnon could get alone with and close to Tamar.

13:9 Amnon seems to have been in a larger room of the house. When everyone left him, he retreated to the bedroom to lie down.

13:10 The bedroom was normally the innermost room of the house and the least public.

13:11 Sleep with me is literally "lie with me"—have intercourse.

13:12 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 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; it is unlikely David would have granted Amnon's request in violation of the Mosaic law ([Lv 18:11](#); [20:17](#)).

13:15 The words Amnon hated Tamar show that his feelings toward his half sister had been nothing more than lust (cp. [vv. 1,4](#)).

13:16 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. It was also probably assumed that the young woman's brothers would be sure the man who had dishonored their sister would be a good husband to her. 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.

13:17 This woman was a disrespectful way to speak of Amnon's half sister whom he had hoped to marry.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 13-14".

[13:19](#) Tamar's actions were typical signs of mourning.

[13:20](#) Absalom found Tamar and discovered Amnon had raped her. Be quiet for now probably meant Absalom wanted Tamar to refrain from revealing what happened until he could think of a way to help her or to take vengeance on Amnon. As a desolate woman, Tamar would probably not marry; however, Absalom cared for her in his house.

[13:21](#) 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.

[13:22](#) 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](#)).

[13:29](#) The rest of the king's sons fled, perhaps fearing Absalom would kill them to eliminate rivals for the throne. A mule was the nobility's mount of choice ([1Ki 1:33,38,44](#)).

[13:30](#) Perhaps he who reported to the king that Absalom had struck down all the king's sons was one of the first to flee Baal-hazor. Thus he was panicked and lacked full information. David must have regretted his decision to send all his sons to Baal-hazor ([v. 27](#)).

[13:32](#) Jonadab clarified that only Amnon was dead, and he revealed that Absalom had planned Amnon's murder ever since Amnon had disgraced his sister Tamar. The text does not reveal how Jonadab knew Absalom's plans; perhaps it was only his theory, or perhaps he had overheard Absalom muttering threats.

[13:34](#) Coming from the road west of him indicates David's sons had circled around rather than returning directly to Jerusalem.

[13:37-38](#) Talmai was Absalom's maternal grandfather ([3:3](#)). He ruled Geshur, a small Aramean city-state along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Since Talmai was Absalom's grandfather and was on friendly terms with David, insisting on Absalom's return would have been politically difficult. Consequently, Absalom stayed three years in Geshur.

[13:39](#) David missed Absalom, and he had finished grieving over Amnon's death. Yet he did not arrange for Absalom's homecoming. Whether from lack of fortitude or uncertainty about the right course of action, David's inaction would lead to further troubles.

2 Samuel 14

[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.

[14:2-3](#) Tekoa was approximately seven miles southwest of Jerusalem. Perhaps Joab thought Tekoa was far enough away that David would not recognize someone from there. Joab intended the clever woman to play a dramatic role that would influence the king to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem.

[14:4](#) The clever woman ([v. 2](#)) came to the king and acted as if she were seeking David's judgment on a matter.

[14:7](#) 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.

[14:8](#) 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](#) 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.

[14:10](#) David further assured her that no one would trouble her any more.

[14:11](#) 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.

[14:12](#) 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 David was unwilling to give himself the same judgment he gave the woman. He was unwilling to restore Absalom, who had murdered Amnon.

[14:14](#) The woman also appealed to God's grace. The Lord takes sin seriously, but He also tries to restore the one banished from Him.

[14:15-16](#) The woman acted as though she was returning to the matter of her son and her inheritance.

[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.

[14:18](#) David was indeed discerning, and he suspected the woman's collaboration with a member of the royal family.

14:20 The woman confessed that Joab had used her to address the issue indirectly, but David had seen through her presentation.

14:21 Despite David's recognition of Joab's ploy, he asked his nephew to bring Absalom from Geshur.

14:22 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.

14:25 The description of Absalom's physical appearance makes him sound like a leader, and it prepares the reader for Absalom's coup attempt in chapter 15.

14:26 Five pounds is literally "200 shekels." Many manuscripts say "100 shekels." Absalom's thick hair would have made him appear strong and powerful to many people.

14:27 Absalom had a daughter named Tamar. This was his way of honoring his sister.

14:28 Both David and Absalom lived in Jerusalem, but they did not speak to each other for two years as the tension between them mounted.

14:30 Absalom knew if he set the field of Joab on fire, Joab could no longer avoid talking to him as he had done up to that point.

14:32 Absalom asked Joab to get him an audience with David. He suggested it would have been preferable for him to remain in Geshur. Absalom wanted his father to decide once and for all how he would handle his murder of Amnon.

14:33 Absalom finally met with his father, David, but this one meeting would not heal a wound that had festered for five years ([v. 28](#); [13:38](#)).

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

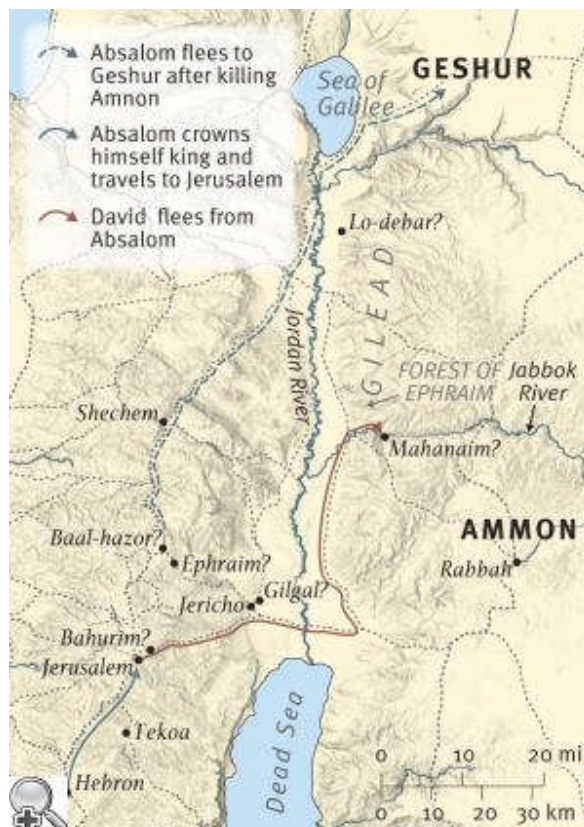
2 Samuel 13-14

2 Samuel 13

13:1-14:33 Absalom's Banishment and Reinstatement. Chapters 13-20 show the “evil... out of your own house” that Nathan warned David of in [12:11](#), namely, the rebellion of his son Absalom. Absalom kills his half brother Amnon to avenge the rape of his sister, but is eventually pardoned by David. Absalom then forms a conspiracy and declares himself king, but the rebellion is put down and Absalom is killed. In the aftermath there is an attempt by a group of Benjaminites to withdraw from Israel, but the attempt is thwarted. Often in this section the narrator has to follow several simultaneous story lines. Several times he backtracks and picks up a line by repeating the last statement in that line with expansion or variation (see [13:34a](#) and [37](#); [15:37](#) and [16:15](#); [18:17b](#) and [19:8b](#); [18:33](#) and [19:4](#); [19:24a](#) and [25](#)). The writer of 1-2 Kings uses this same technique to keep track of reigns in Judah and Israel.

David and Absalom *c.* 985 B.C.

In retaliation for the incestuous rape of his sister, Absalom killed his brother Amnon at Baal-hazor and fled to Geshur. After three years, arrangements were made for Absalom to return to Jerusalem, and later he and David were reconciled. Soon after this, however, Absalom led a coup against David in Hebron, and David fled to Mahanaim. When Absalom attacked David's forces in the forest of Ephraim, Absalom was defeated and killed, allowing David to return to Jerusalem.



13:1-22 After a time suggests that some time has passed since the end of [ch. 12](#). This is an account of both rape and incest—the brother-sister relationship between Tamar and Amnon is referred to a dozen

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 13-14".

times. This rape was an **outrageous thing** (see [Gen. 34:7](#); [Deut. 22:21](#); [Judg. 20:6](#); [Jer. 29:23](#)) that was **not done in Israel** ([2 Sam. 13:12](#)). Since it occurred in the royal family, it had implications for the whole nation.

13:1-2 Tamar was Absalom's full sister and the half sister of Amnon, David's eldest son. **he made himself ill**. Amnon's "love" could better be described as "lust."

13:3 The term **crafty** (Hb. *khakam*) is normally translated as "wise" or "skillful." Here, however, it is used in a negative sense.

13:6-8 The word for **cakes** (Hb. *lebibah*) is used only here in Scripture. It is related to the word "heart" (Hb. *lebab*), so it may have been thought of as a food for the sick. The word translated **baked** ([v. 8](#)) usually means "boiled" (see [1 Sam. 2:13](#)), so it may be a type of dumpling. It apparently never occurred to David to be suspicious, and Tamar, of course, would obey her father.

13:12-13 such a thing is not done in Israel. Intercourse between brother and sister, even half brother and half sister, was forbidden in [Lev. 18:9](#), and the stress on the outrageousness makes it seem likely that this prohibition was accepted at the time of David. **he will not withhold me from you**. Perhaps Tamar is saying that David would be willing to bend the rules, or perhaps she is just trying to escape.

13:15-17 While Amnon's response to Tamar may be an archetypal example of a "blame the victim" mentality, it is particularly striking in the context of sexual lust. **wrong in sending me away**. Tamar's appeal is based on the fact that within this ancient Near Eastern cultural setting Amnon's actions required marriage ([Deut. 22:28-29](#)). **Put this woman out**. Amnon's hatred and contempt of his sister is expressed by his final refusal to heed her wishes or even use her name.

13:16 this wrong... is greater than the other. If a man seduced an unmarried (or unbetrothed) woman, he had to marry her, unless her father refused; if he raped her, he was not permitted to divorce her ([Ex. 22:16](#); [Deut. 22:28-29](#)). Having ruined her life, he had a responsibility toward her.

13:18 The only other place this kind of **robe** appears in the Bible is in the Joseph story ([Gen. 37:3](#), as the ESV footnote explains).

13:19 Putting **ashes** (or dirt) on one's head and tearing one's clothes were expressions of grief or humiliation (see note on [1 Sam. 4:12](#)), as was covering the head with the hand(s) or a garment ([2 Sam. 15:30](#); [Est. 6:12](#); [Jer. 2:37](#)).

13:20 Do not take this to heart, perhaps because it would be easier to remain quiet, or perhaps because Absalom was determined to take vengeance in his own time. Absalom himself did take it to heart (cf. [vv. 23-29](#)).

13:21 David was **very angry**, but he did not do anything. He showed favoritism toward his eldest son (see ESV footnote; cf. [3:2](#)), which was the source of many of the later problems in David's family (cf. [1 Kings 1:6](#)). Heads of households have to deal justly with members of their household, but because of his sin with Bathsheba, David had lost his moral courage and clarity of judgment.

13:22 Spoke... neither good nor bad may mean "do nothing against" (see [Gen. 31:24, 29](#)).

[13:23](#) As seen in [1 Samuel 25](#), sheepshearing was a time of feasting. Absalom **invited all the king's sons**, and the next four verses explain how he gives the invitation. Absalom invited David, probably guessing that he would decline, in order to lend an aura of importance to the occasion and to mask his true intentions. If he had started out by inviting Amnon, it could have seemed suspicious.

[13:29](#) The king's sons seem to have normally ridden mules. Absalom even rides one into battle ([18:9](#)).

[13:37](#) **Talmai** was Absalom's maternal grandfather ([3:3](#)).

[13:39](#) The Hebrew for **the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom** is difficult. It could also mean "the spirit of the king ceased to go out against Absalom" (cf. ESV footnote). The Hebrew lacks the word "spirit," but the verb "longed" or "ceased" is feminine and thus implies that the spirit or soul is properly inferred as the subject. (Some manuscripts of the Septuagint, together with a text from Qumran, explicitly have "the spirit of the king," though this may also be an inference.) The author is thus telling readers either that David yearned to see his son or that he no longer wanted to take vengeance on him; in either case, readers are set up for Absalom's return in the next chapter.

2 Samuel 14

[14:1-3](#) **the king's heart went out to Absalom**. This does not necessarily imply that his thoughts were positive, just that he was thinking about the matter. Joab recruited a **wise woman** and **put the words in her mouth** in an effort to push the king toward reconciliation with Absalom. (Later, however, Joab certainly does not seem to favor Absalom; cf. [18:10-18](#).) **Tekoa**, hometown of Amos ([Amos 1:1](#)), is in the Judean hills about 10 miles (16 km) south of Jerusalem, near Bethlehem.

[14:4-7](#) The woman, using a "parable" as Nathan did (cf. [12:1-7](#)), appeals to the king to set aside the ordinary laws demanding the death of a murderer (e.g., [Num. 35:31](#)), not because of any extenuating circumstances in the killing but for the good of the family. David must have first associated the woman's account with the story of Cain and Abel, and then soon realized that it would apply to Absalom's murder of Amnon.

[14:7](#) **heir**. Apparently Absalom was now considered the heir, at least in popular sentiment. The idea of a smoldering **coal** is an image of "hope for the family." **Neither name nor remnant** means "no remaining posterity."

[14:8-17](#) Perhaps David already suspects that Joab is involved in the woman's coming to him, so he deliberately uses the vague word "anyone" (**If anyone says anything to you**) in [v. 10](#). The woman, however, sticks to her own story by referring to **my son**, while she uses a very sensitive term, **avenger of blood** ([v. 11](#)), which would apply to the king himself, who has been thinking about his own son ([v. 1](#)). She asks for an immediate ruling on her own (bogus) case so that she can comment on it (cf. [vv. 13-14](#)). By his words in [v. 11b](#), David indirectly expresses his determination (**As the LORD lives**) to bring back his own lost son. The woman says what Joab has sent her to say ([vv. 13-14](#)) and then goes back to her made-up story ([vv. 15-17](#)). **This** in [v. 15](#) would refer both to her real message in [vv. 13-14](#) and to her "family problem" in [vv. 5-7](#). This woman wisely finishes her dialogue with King David by mentioning her own problem, thus placing herself on the side of the needy and helpless, not in the position of an accuser of the king.

[14:18-20](#) David suspects the woman's real purpose (cf. [vv. 1-17](#)). Having patiently heard her out, he now asks her straightforwardly if Joab was involved in her coming to him with her story.

[14:24](#) **he is not to come into my presence.** David's forgiveness is incomplete, as Absalom complains in [v. 32](#). David is confused: he is unwilling to punish, but also unwilling to forgive fully, so the situation festers.

[14:25-27](#) These verses prepare readers for what is told later about Absalom, especially how he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" ([15:6](#)) by his personal charms. The reference to his abundant **hair** looks ahead to his manner of death, i.e., by being caught by his head in a tree (see [18:9](#)). **The king's weight** indicates that there was a royal standard at the Israelite court.

[14:27](#) Since the **three sons** are unnamed and Absalom says he had no sons ([18:18](#)), these sons probably died young. His **daughter, Tamar**, was probably named for his sister (see note on [13:1-2](#)).

[14:28-32](#) Believing that **Joab** could orchestrate a long-awaited audience with the king, **Absalom** compels Joab's attention by setting his **field on fire**. He finds his current status unsatisfactory and wants either restoration to the royal household or, if guilty, execution ([v. 32](#)).

[14:33](#) **the king kissed Absalom.** The kiss points to Absalom's restoration and closes the section consisting of [chs. 13-14](#), which is a prologue to the revolt of Absalom in [chs. 15-19](#). Clearly the king's kiss was less than full restoration since Absalom himself will soon "kiss away" the hearts of Israel ([15:5-6](#)).

NLT Life Application Study Bible³ *2 Samuel 13-14*

Chapter 13

[13:3-5](#) Amnon was encouraged by his cousin Jonadab to commit sexual sin. We may be more vulnerable to the advice of our relatives because we are close to them. However, we must make sure to evaluate every piece of advice by God's standards, even when it comes from relatives.

Amnon was king David's firstborn son, born and raised during the years between David's rise to fame and his rise to power. He grew into a prince with too much time on his hands and too little control over his thoughts. Amnon set in motion one of the most shameful and destructive series of actions in the royal family. He allowed himself to become obsessed with sexual desire for his half sister Tamar. When his attempt to seduce Tamar failed, he raped her. Then his "desire" for her became loathing and he humiliated her. He even made it look like the incest was his sister's fault. Tamar's full brother Absalom later avenged her shame by killing Amnon.

Amnon

David was an ineffective father. He failed to train or discipline his children. Although he found out and was furious about Amnon's actions, he did nothing. Amnon, like the rest of his siblings, was a child out of control. He was frustrated when he couldn't have his way, yet was disgusted when he did get his way. Without direction, his actions led to self-destruction. The Bible records not even a hint of remorse for what he had done to Tamar.

Family relationships can be sources of strength or systems of dysfunction. We can think about childhood by counting scars and nightmares or by remembering security and dreams. We may

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 482-487.

be creating in our own children one or the other of these histories. In what specific ways have you been settling the painful issues of the past in your own life? In what ways are you contributing to a better past for your children?

Weaknesses and mistakes

- Allowed lustful desires to dominate his life
- Listened to his cousin Jonadab's bad advice
- Raped and then rejected his half sister, Tamar

Lessons from his life

- Children who have everything often lack purpose and direction in their lives
- Thoughts and impulses turn self-destructive if not controlled or channeled
- Parents contribute good or evil by action or inaction in their children's lives
- The distance between lust and hatred is very short

Vital statistics

- Where: Hebron
- Occupation: Prince
- Relatives: Father: David. Mother: Ahinoam. Many half brothers including Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon. Half sister: Tamar.
- Contemporaries: Nathan, Jonadab, Joab, Ahithophel, Hushai

Key verse

"Then suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. 'Get out of here!' he snarled at her" ([2 Samuel 13:15](#)).

Amnon's story is told in [2 Samuel 13:1-39](#). He is also mentioned in [2 Samuel 3:2](#) and [1 Chronicles 3:1](#).

[13:14, 15](#) Love and lust are very different. After Amnon raped his half sister, his "love" turned to hate. Although he had claimed to be in love, he was actually overcome by lust. Love is patient; lust requires immediate satisfaction. Love is kind; lust is harsh. Love does not demand its own way; lust does. You can read about the characteristics of real love in [1 Corinthians 13](#). Lust may feel like love at first, but when physically expressed, it results in self-disgust and hatred of the other person. If you just can't wait, what you feel is not true love.

[13:16](#) Rape was strictly forbidden by God ([Deuteronomy 22:28, 29](#)). Why was sending Tamar away an even greater crime? By throwing her out, Amnon made it look as if Tamar had made a shameful proposition to him, and there were no witnesses on her behalf because he had gotten rid of the servants. His crime destroyed her chances of marriage—because she was no longer a virgin, she could not be given in marriage.

[13:20](#) Absalom tried to comfort Tamar and persuade her not to turn the incident into a public scandal. Secretly, he planned to take revenge against Amnon himself. This he did two years later ([13:23-33](#)). Absalom told Tamar the crime was only a family matter. But God's standards for moral conduct are not suspended when we deal with family matters.

[13:21-24](#) David was angry with Amnon for raping Tamar, but David did not punish him. David probably hesitated because

(1) he didn't want to cross Amnon, who was his firstborn son ([1 Chronicles 3:1](#)) and therefore next in line to be king, and

(2) David was guilty of a similar sin himself in his adultery with Bathsheba. While David was unsurpassed as a king and military leader, he lacked skill and sensitivity as a husband and father.

[13:37-39](#) Absalom fled to Geshur because King Talmai was his grandfather ([1 Chronicles 3:2](#)), and he would be welcomed.

Chapter 14

[14:1](#) Why is so much attention given to Absalom in [chapters 13-19](#)? His revenge against Amnon and rebellion against David were beginning the final decline of David's kingdom that had been prophesied in [12:10-12](#). The cycle of lust and murder had begun with David's adultery with Bathsheba. By killing his half brother Amnon, Absalom was getting revenge for the rape of his sister Tamar, as well as getting rid of the firstborn son, the one next in line to be king. Clearly he had his sights set on being Israel's king and he did everything in his power to obtain that goal—killing a half brother and rebelling against his father. Absalom was handsome and popular like his father, but lacked his father's heart for God.

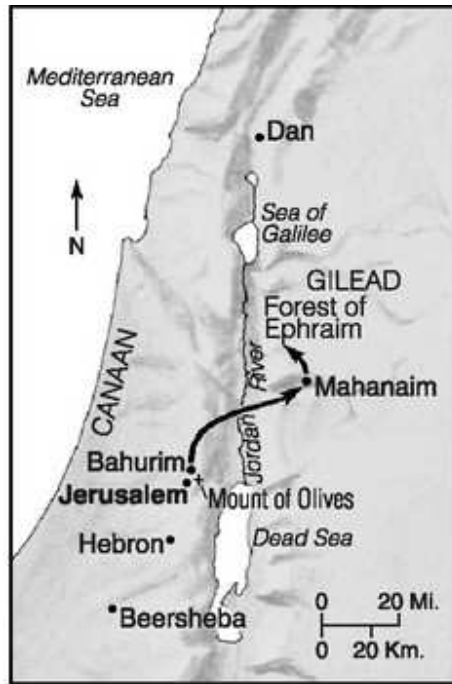
What can we learn from this terrible story? (1) Even the highest-ranking and best-equipped people are sinners and rebels at heart. We must guard our own hearts against sin and rebellion. (2) David failed to teach his children God's ways. Even if our children are raised in church, we must teach and exemplify character and obedience to God. (3) David was preoccupied with government, wives, and concubines; he failed to act decisively to correct the evil in his family. At times, his guilt over his own sin caused him to decline to discipline his sons caught in similar sins. That proved to be his family's undoing. Whenever possible, we must break cycles of lust, hatred, and rebellion. To do so, we must stay involved in guiding our children's lives while they are still under our care.

[14:11](#) The law provided for a way to avenge murder. [Numbers 35:9-21](#) records how cities of refuge protected people from revenge and how blood avengers were to pursue murderers. This woman was asking for the king's protection against any claim against her.

[14:27](#) By naming his daughter Tamar, Absalom was showing his love and respect for his sister Tamar. This was also a reminder to everyone of the Amnon/Tamar incident.

[14:30](#) Already we can see the seeds of rebellion in Absalom. As an independent and scheming young man, he took matters into his own hands and killed his brother ([13:22-29](#)). Without his father or anyone else to keep him in check, he probably did whatever he wanted, as evidenced by his setting Joab's field on fire to get his attention ([14:30](#)). Undoubtedly his good looks also added to his self-centeredness ([14:25](#)). Children need discipline, especially those with natural abilities and beauty. Otherwise, like Absalom, they will grow up thinking they can do whatever they want whenever they want to.

[14:33](#) David only made half-hearted efforts to correct his children. He did not punish Amnon for his sin against Tamar, nor did he deal decisively with Absalom's murder of Amnon. Such indecisiveness became David's undoing. When we ignore sin, we experience greater pain than if we deal with it immediately.



Absalom's Rebellion

Absalom crowned himself king in Hebron. David and his men fled from Jerusalem, crossed the Jordan and went to Mahanaim. Absalom and his army followed, only to be defeated in the forest of Ephraim, where Absalom was killed.

Absalom

A father's mistakes are often reflected in the lives of his children. In Absalom, David saw a bitter replay and amplification of many of his own past sins. God had predicted that David's family would suffer because of his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. David's heart was broken as he realized that God's predictions were coming true. God forgave David, but he did not cancel the consequences of his sin. David was horrified as he saw his son's strengths run wild without the controls God had built into his own life.

By most casual evaluations, Absalom would have made an excellent king, and the people loved him. But he lacked the inner character and control needed in a good leader. His appearance, skill, and position did not make up for his lack of personal integrity.

David's sins took him away from God, but repentance brought him back. In contrast, Absalom sinned and kept on sinning. Although he relied heavily on the advice of others, he was not wise enough to evaluate the counsel he received.

Can you identify with Absalom? Do you find yourself on a fast track toward self-destruction? Absalom wasn't able to say, "I was wrong. I need forgiveness." God offers forgiveness, but we will not experience that forgiveness until we genuinely admit our sins and confess them to God. Absalom rejected his father's love and ultimately God's love. How often do you miss entering back into God's love through the door of forgiveness?

Strengths and accomplishments

- Was handsome and charismatic like his father, David
- Kindly comforted his sister, Tamar, after she had been raped and allowed her to live with him

Weaknesses and mistakes

- Avenged the rape of his sister, Tamar, by killing his half brother Amnon
- Plotted against his father to take away the throne
- Consistently listened to the wrong advice

Lessons from his life

- The sins of parents are often repeated and amplified in their children
- A smart man gets a lot of advice; a wise man evaluates the advice he gets
- Actions against God's plans will fail, sooner or later

Vital statistics

- Where: Hebron
- Occupation: Prince
- Relatives: Father: David. Mother: Maacah. Half brothers: Amnon, Kileab, Solomon, and others. Sister: Tamar.
- Contemporaries: Nathan, Jonadab, Joab, Ahithophel, Hushai

Key verse: "But while he was there, he sent secret messengers to all the tribes of Israel to stir up a rebellion against the king. 'As soon as you hear the ram's horn,' his message read, 'you are to say, "Absalom has been crowned king in Hebron"' (2 Samuel 15:10).

Absalom's story is told in [2 Samuel 3:3; 13-19](#).

