

We do not have to imagine the temptations another person may endure, but we can pray for those we know and love, so that they are protected by the Lord against the devil's wiles. This is why active and prayerful support of our leaders is so vital.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Each one of us knows the power of sexual desire, so in whatever way you feel appropriate, ask the Lord to help you keep a proper control on your sexual feelings.*
- *Some people work in the field of counselling and they have the difficult job of helping people come through the consequences of their sins and the sins of others. Pray for any you know who work in counselling in your church, as they will have come across many sexual issues of great delicacy and difficulty in their work.*

Final Prayer

Lord God, this day is Your precious gift to all, especially those who own Your name. Keep us from falling, and fulfil Your purposes in us both today and in the future. Bring us to the end of the day rejoicing, and as Your disciples, may we be glad to be of service to You through all we do and say. AMEN

Prayer

Lord, speak to me in the quiet moments of this day. Touch my life and remind me to turn and choose Your way instead of mine. Encourage me to exercise the gifts and graces You have given me as a child of God. Walk with me along the pathway of my life and teach me according to Your Wisdom and Love. Lord, speak to me, so I will be ready to do Your will; AMEN.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Weapons of War

Pray for the day when weapons will not be needed and swords will be 'turned into ploughshares' as prophesied. Pray that the Lord will judge the earth in righteousness.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for those charged with the care of children in need*
- *Pray for all who suffer and have no access to medical care*
- *Give thanks for the security of the life God has given you*

Meditation

Your Glory fills my life, O Lord, my God,

As the oxygen in the air fills our lungs as we breath;

As the light from a bulb fills each corner of a room;

As the life of a child fills the life of its parents;

As the gift of a friend fills the heart with affection;

As the smell of good food fills the appetite with hunger;

As the sound of an orchestra fills a hall full of people;

As the books of a library fill a nation with knowledge;

As the life of Christ fulfils our need for God's love;

Your glory fills my life, O Lord my God, and I rejoice in it!

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 13:1-14

¹ Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after some time Amnon, David's son, loved her. ² And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

³ But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. ⁴ And he said to him, 'Why, O son of the king, are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?' Amnon said to him, 'I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.' ⁵ Jonadab said to him, 'Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, "Let my sister Tamar come and give me some food to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and take it directly from her."' ⁶ So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, 'Pray let my sister

Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand.’⁷ Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, ‘Go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.’

⁸ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, where he was lying down. And she took dough, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹ And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, ‘Send out every one from me.’ So every one went out from him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, ‘Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand.’ And Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. ¹¹ But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, ‘Come, lie with me, my sister.’ ¹² She answered him, ‘No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do make this mistake. ¹³ As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the stupid fools of Israel. So, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.’ ¹⁴ But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her.

Review

The story of David now takes what appears to be a dramatic twist, with the story of the rape of Tamar. It seems that the story of 2 Samuel moves on to new ground to take the focus away from David, but the rape of Tamar is the beginning of a long story of court intrigue involving David’s sons Amnon and Absalom which eventually becomes violent. As the whole story unfolds we realise that this is none other than the fulfilment of Nathan’s prophecy that there would be violent struggle and trouble within David’s family⁶ (2 Samuel 12:11). Since his anointing by Samuel, David enjoyed the unstinting praise of scripture for his life and his deeds, but after his adultery with Bathsheba, everything changed. God’s love for him continued and the covenant relationship he had with God remained unbroken, but the story reads like the accumulated evidence of judgement upon David for his wrongdoing. In this way, scripture is utterly honest and full of candour, allowing us to see David as a real person, and as a great and blessed leader of God’s people; but also a flawed hero who had to bear the consequences of his sins.

David’s sons The list of David’s sons in 2 Samuel 3:2ff lists Amnon as David firstborn son. For reference, it lists Absalom as the third and Adonijah as the fourth and each of these sons were born to different women (the other sons in the list are not heard of again in scripture). So the characters we will discover as the main contenders to the throne of Israel after the life of David are Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah and Solomon. We have read about the birth of Solomon already (by Bathsheba), almost as an afterthought in the story of David’s adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:24,25), and after David had confessed his sin. After this record, we do not hear of him again until he appears at the beginning of 1 Kings to claim the throne from his father David (before it could be taken by Adonijah). The rest of 2 Samuel however is a long story about the other sons of David, principally Amnon and Absalom.

The story of the rape The passage describes in detail how Amnon raped his brother Absalom’s sister, Tamar. Unfortunately, this was what that happened in the courts of ancient kings who had large numbers of sons and daughters all living together in the extended family. We might have hoped that David would have kept a tighter moral grip on his family, but it seems that he was unable to do so or really know what was going on under

his own nose. The rape is all the more distasteful because it happened quite openly within David’s court, and the damage it eventually did to David was enormous.

The story describes how Amnon become love sick for Tamar, and enlisted the help of a friend (Jonadab) to try and engineer the circumstance under which he could get close to her. Having agreed a simple plan to feign illness and obtain the private attention of Tamar, he used King David to give a veneer of respectability to his plan; perhaps he knew that without David’s authority, Tamar would not have gone near him in such privacy. When Tamar went to attend to Amnon, instead of proposing love to her, he violently threw himself at her and raped her, despite her protestation that with a little care and time, she could be his for the asking (13:13). Tamar’s words to Amnon as he fought to control her (13:13 were not simply common sense, but were prophetic of what was to come. She said of herself ‘where could I carry my shame?’ and was obliged to spend the rest of her days as a defiled woman, ineligible for marriage, within her brother Absalom’s house (2 Sam 13:19). As she protested she said to Amnon; ‘you would be like one of the stupid fools of Israel’, an apt description for the actions of one who was first in line for the throne of Israel, and was yet unable to control his sexual desires. For the sake of sexual pleasure alone, for ‘love’ had nothing to do with it, Amnon compromised his own future, as we will find out tomorrow.

In conclusion It is hard for us not to see a parallel between David’s adultery with Bathsheba, and Amnon’s rape of Tamar. Each was overtaken by sexual desire for a beautiful woman and was prepared to compromise the future in order to satisfy it. The difference is that David repented of his evil actions, and proceeded to love Bathsheba and bear a child by her; and his son Amnon turned on Tamar with hatred and loathing (13:15ff).

Amnon’s sexual desire was perverted and godless in that he thought he was in love, yet in reality he acted by means of domination. It is no surprise that the Bible contains a number of stories of rape; Judah’s incestuous relationship with his daughter in law, also called Tamar, in Genesis 38, and the terrible story of the rape of the Levite’s concubine in Judges 19, for example. All of these depict a reality of life common to this day, but which exposes the worst kind of male behaviour imaginable because it is an abuse of power, and an abuse of responsibility and relationships, all of which are totally unacceptable to God.

It is quite clear from our passage that although Amnon was David’s firstborn, he was not fit to be King.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. There are a number of stories of rape in the Bible. Why is such an offensive crime written about in the Bible?
2. There was a natural favouritism of the firstborn in ancient societies. Does this persist today and in what ways?
3. Read the story and discuss the list of Amnon’s characteristics which preclude him from consideration as Israel’s next King.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

It is common for Satan to use sex as a means of bringing down the leaders of God’s people. It has happened so often that we should not be surprised. The real question is what should we do about it? The first thing we can do is to protect our leaders spiritually through prayer. There are thousand ways in which evil thoughts can enter a person’s mind, and it is difficult for anyone to defend themselves at every place and in every circumstance.