

## Decisions

**2 Samuel 13:7, 11-14, 20-22, 31, 36-39; 14:24; 18:33**

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### A. Not Driven by Feelings (vs. 13:7):

1. David sent to the house of Tamar, saying – David persistently sought to have Tamar serve her brother by repeatedly instructing her to go to his house. It is definitely clear from David’s response that he had no idea what was going on. He had a relationship with his son (v. 5), but not a close one. He sought to please his son rather than learn what was taking place.
  - a) Unmarried daughters were kept in close seclusion from the company of men; no strangers, nor even their relatives of the other sex, being permitted to see them without the presence of witnesses.<sup>1</sup>
  - b) Tamar was Amnon’s half-sister; both were children of King David but by different mothers. Incestuous relationships were condemned not just in Israel (e.g., Lev. 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22) but to a greater or lesser degree in the ancient Near East generally. See sidebar on “Brother-Sister Marriages in the Ancient World” for more on this issue.<sup>2</sup>
  
2. Go now to your brother – David does not investigate why Amnon wants his sister to come to his house (as the king, he has many people available to serve him). Instead of learning why he changes his instruction to command. Because he believes Amnon to be sick, he commands her to go right away.
  - a) Jonadab was Amnon’s cousin, the son of David’s brother Shammah, here called Shimeah (1 Sam. 16:9), and he was a very crafty man, probably a minor official in the palace. He will show up again in 13:32 after Amnon has been killed by Absalom’s servants. Anybody in our lives who makes it easy for us to sin is certainly not much of a friend; in fact, by following Jonadab’s advice, Amnon ended up becoming a rapist, committing incest, and getting killed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R. (n.d.). *A Commentary. Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Joshua–Esther: Vol. II* (p. 245). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

<sup>2</sup> Walton, J. H. (2009). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel* (Vol. 2, p. 461). Zondervan.

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 81). Victor.

3. Go now to your brother – Nowhere do we hear of David visiting his other children. Amnon, being his firstborn, could have clouded his decision-making, causing him to command his younger sibling, Tamar, to bring him food.
4. Prepare food for him – Food preparation would take a lot of time because cooking in their day is not the same as it is in ours. So David made this a pressing situation because of Amnon’s deception that he was sick and Tamar’s food preparation, which would take a lot of work, hard labor, and considerable effort, as we would see in the case of Martha and Mary, without any further oversight from him.
5. She brought him to eat – Tamar, in obedience to her father, persistently worked hard to prepare a meal for her supposedly sick brother and then innocently brought it directly to him (v. 10). It seems that her intent in obeying her father was to care for her brother, since he was sick.
  - a) Amnon was the oldest of David’s sons and the apparent heir to the throne, so perhaps he felt he had privileges that the other sons didn’t have. It was evil for him to nurture an abnormal love for his half sister and he should have stopped feeding that appetite the moment it started (Matt. 5:27–30). The sin was not only unnatural, but it violated the standard of sexual purity established by God’s law (Lev. 18:9–11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22). However, he became so infatuated with Tamar that he really thought he loved her and became ill thinking about it. The virgin princesses were kept secluded in their own quarters, apart even from their male relatives, and Amnon’s imagination worked overtime as he thought about her.<sup>4</sup>
6. He took hold of her – His desire for his sister was so lustful (13:1-2; 14-15); as soon as she came into his presence, he relentlessly did whatever he needed to do to make her lie down with him.
7. Said lie with me – He did not just physically seek to force himself on her; he kept trying to get Tamar to engage the way he wanted her by constantly telling her to be with him intimately. After repeating this, he commanded her, as her older brother, to do what he said.
  - a) What he thought was love was really only lust, a passion that so controlled him that he became like an animal. Of course she resisted him as long as she could. Her refusal to cooperate was based on the law of God and the responsibility of the nation of Israel to be different from their pagan neighbors (v. 12). David’s sin had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme God (12:14). Her use of the words “folly” and “fool” (vv. 12–13 kjv) remind us of Genesis 34 and Judges 19–20, two other despicable rape scenes in Scripture. (See Gen. 34:7; Judg. 19:23–24; 20:6, 10.) Tamar tried to stall for time by suggesting that he ask the king for permission to marry her (v. 13), even though she knew that such a marriage was prohibited by the Law of Moses (Lev. 18:9–11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (pp. 80–81). Victor.

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 82). Victor.

8. She answered and said – She put up resistance by constantly trying to engage him in conversation, but he was unwilling to listen.
9. Do not violate me; afflicted – Tamar repeatedly sought to explain to him how much pain and distress this would be for her, and her own brother did not care. She viewed herself as being defenseless against him, leading to her being inflicted with inner and outer pain. He still did not care.
  - a) 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).<sup>6</sup>
10. Such a thing is not done – Tamar, constantly speaking to him, even tries to get Amnon to understand that no one in Israel would obligate themselves to faithfully work to apply themselves to anything like this. Tamar recognized that Amnon was never sick. It was all a scheme to get her to lie down with him. He tricked her father and her genuine heart as a sister to premeditatively rape his own sister, violating several Levitical laws. She is totally taken by surprise by something she has never heard being done.
  - a) When Tamar describes this act of rape, she uses a “shock” word that is designed to bring someone to their senses. The second and third elements of her plea concern personal honor, hers and Amnon’s respectively. She realizes that without witnesses there can be no case made against him, and therefore her only hope is to play upon his better judgment and his character as a prince of Israel. She tells him that he will be counted among the fools, a term that applies to men without principle or personal honor who come to a bad end. In Tamar’s final attempt (v. 13) she suggests her willingness to join Amnon’s household as his wife.<sup>7</sup>
11. This disgraceful thing – Feminine, singular, absolute common, definite with – Tamar views this as a grave, outrageous sin. It is a serious defiant violation of the will of God as written in the laws of Moses. Tamar is more dedicated to doing God’s will than her older brother, who is in line to be the next king.
12. Now – She is trying everything to stop this aggressive attack on her by intensely urging her brother Amnon, commanding him to communicate with David his father. She does not just command him to speak with her father; she insists that he specifically relate the circumstances he is inflicting on her. She is demanding that he do this right now.

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<sup>6</sup> 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). Victor Books.

<sup>7</sup> Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament (electronic ed., 2 Sa 13:12–13). InterVarsity Press.

13. Not withhold me from you – Repeatedly insisting that David will not withhold her from Amnon is not true because of David’s response when he hears about this (v. 31). She seems to be saying this to get him to refrain from raping her.
14. He did not listen to her – Amnon gave Tamar his full attention and clearly understood everything she said, but had no desire to respect her wishes.
15. He did not listen to her – Our feelings or passions can be so strong that they can dominate our decisions; Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane had to willfully decide to do God’s will (Matt. 26:36-46).
16. He was stronger than her – Amnon became even more obstinate, continually applying physical strength that Tamar had no ability to overcome, so that he persistently overwhelmed her with no intentions to stop what he had stubbornly decided to do.
17. Do not violate me; afflicted – Tamar kept fighting with her voice because that is all she had. Maybe her brother would hear her pain, her discomfort, and inner anguish and stop his assault. It was to no avail.
  - a) True love would never violate another person’s body just to satisfy selfish appetites, nor would true love try to persuade someone to disobey the law of God. In his sensual cravings, Amnon confused lust with love and didn’t realize that there is a fine line between selfish love (lust) and hatred. Before he sinned, he wanted Tamar all to himself; but after he sinned, he couldn’t get rid of her fast enough.<sup>8</sup>
  - b) The word “woman” is not in the Hebrew text of verse 17, so Amnon was saying, “Throw this thing out!” This explains why Tamar accused Amnon of being even more cruel by casting her aside than by raping her. Having lost her virginity, Tamar was not a good prospect for marriage, and she could no longer reside in the apartments with the virgins. Where would she go? Who would take her in? Who would even want her? How could she prove that Amnon was the aggressor and that she hadn’t seduced him?<sup>9</sup>
18. Amnon hated her with great hatred - This is the way lust works. Once the person or persons have satisfied their passions, there is no place in their hearts for a relationship.
19. Amnon hated her with great hatred – Amnon was so wrapped up in his feelings that his sister did not matter, God’s law did not matter, or what his father thought. Selfishness destroys those around us and eventually destroys us

## **B. Cannot Be Self Serving (13:20-22):**

1. Absalom said to her – Knowing that Tamar went to his brother’s house, Absalom sees her disposition upon her return and constantly speaks with his sister about what had taken place.
2. Absalom said to her – The nature of Absalom’s question seems to suggest he must have known something. Tamar was his full sister.

<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 82). Victor.

<sup>9</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 82). Victor.

3. Has Amnon your brother been with you; to be – Absalom's question was persistent; he had no intention of stopping until he confirmed what he was completely convinced had taken place between Amnon and his sister Tamar.
4. Keep silent, my sister, he is your brother – He commands her to keep a secret. The meaning of this word is not just about not talking about it; he is knowingly saying she needs to accept this injustice and the wickedness done against her, and not do nothing about it. Absalom could have been saying this because of what he had planned to do against his brother.
  - a) Absalom urges his sister not to make the matter a public scandal and attempts to quiet her by minimizing its significance. Meanwhile, he formulates his own secret plans for revenge (vv. 22,28,32).
5. Keep silent, my sister, he is your brother – Using someone else's circumstances to pursue personal vendettas or ambitions harms everyone involved.
6. Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother's house - Tamar became depressed, feeling destroyed because the rape left a lasting impact on her.
7. When David heard this, he became angry – David became fully aware of all that took place (not sure how he came to know; he did go to Amnon's house regularly, v. 5), and it made him very angry, so he kept fretting.
  - a) When David heard about this, all he did was become angry (2 Samuel 13:21). He did not discipline his son in any way.
  - b) There was nothing done for two full years (2 Samuel 13:23).
  - c) David's brother knew (13:32-33; Jonadab) that Absalom had determined to kill Amnon, but David did not know.
8. When David heard this, he became angry - You would think that David would run to his daughter to comfort and restore her, but he did not. You would think that David, fueled with anger, would rush to punish Amnon, but he did not. All this horrific act went unaddressed by their father. Maybe David was carrying his own guilt and shame (2 Sam. 11-12).
  - a) He was furious: Although David was incensed by Amnon's rape of Tamar, there is no record that he took any punitive action against him. Perhaps the memory of his own sin with Bathsheba adversely affected his judicious handling of the matter. Whatever the reason, David abdicated his responsibility both as king and as father. This lack of disciplinary action eventually led to the death of Amnon and the revolts of Absalom and Adonijah.
  - b) She went to the apartment of her brother Absalom, because in a polygamous society, it was the responsibility of a full brother to protect the honor of a full sister. When Absalom saw her tears, her torn garment, and the ashes on her head, he realized that she was in great pain and humiliation, and he deduced that Amnon had violated her.

His question “Has that Amnon<sup>5</sup>, your brother, been with you?” (v. 20 niv) reveals this, for the phrase “been with you” was a euphemism for “gone to bed with you.”<sup>10</sup>

9. When David heard this, he became angry – When we leave issues unaddressed as parents it makes things worst and provides Satan more time to turn our anger into “bitterness, wrath, clamor and slander.” (Eph. 4:26-27, 29-32).
10. Absalom did not speak – Unaddressed family drama stirred more hate and resentment to the point Absalom harbored hatred in his heart towards his brother. I am sure watching his sister in complete anguish every day did not help.
11. Absalom hated Amnon – The unaddressed pain stirred up an intense hostile desire for violence. Absalom purposefully refused to interact with his brother, stirring up a desire for vengeance to be executed.
  - a) With the murder of Amnon, Absalom not only avenged the rape of his sister but also secured for himself the position of successor to the throne (3:3; 15:1-6).
12. Because Amnon violated his sister – Absalom became completely resolved to retaliate for the lawless, painful, and defenseless act his brother committed against his sister. There was no turning back.
13. Because Amnon violated his sister – No leadership, as the case of Abel and Cain leads to sin and death in a family. *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* (John 8:44; NASU)

## **C. God’s Word Must Not Be Ignored (13:31, 36-39, 14:24, 18:33):**

1. Then the king arose – When King David heard that Absalom had killed Amnon, David stopped everything he was doing, rose up from where he was sitting, and paced back and forth, overwhelmed and consumed with grief.
2. Tore his clothes - The tiring of his clothes, in a culture where clothes were not as plentiful as today (for the king most likely had more than others), was an extreme display of distress.
  - a) David loved his children (12:20-23 [son born from Bethsheba]; 13:37 [Amnon’s death]; 13:38-39 [David longed to go to Absalom after Amnon was killed]; 19:1-7 [Absalom’s death])
  - b) Her tearing of this robe not only demonstrates her anguish, it also dramatically underscores her changed status. Putting dust or ashes on the head was a gesture of

<sup>10</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). [\*Be restored\*](#) (pp. 82–83). Victor.

mourning and distress throughout the ancient Near East (see comment on 1 Sam. 4:12).<sup>11</sup>

3. Lay on the ground - David lying on the ground meant, as in the case of losing his son, who was born to Bathsheba, a vivid display of anguish. David did not plan to ever get up. He was distorted. David definitely loved his children but did not nurture them as a father. Why he chose not to be close to his kids, whom he obviously loved very much, is not explained in the scriptures. Other than it being said that David went by Amnon's house, and it seems like it is a customary visit (2 Sam. 13:5), he did not seem to be enmeshed in raising them.
4. As soon as he had finished speaking behold - As soon as Jonadab had completed repeatedly, with much alarm, verbally commanding David's time, everyone's attention was drawn to David's sons, who entered the room. Absalom killed Amnon, but the family was in chaos.
  - a) The old slogan "Don't get mad—get even" may satisfy some people, but it can never be pleasing to the Lord. The Christian way is the way of forgiveness and faith, trusting the Lord to work everything out for our good and His glory (1 Peter 4:12–19).<sup>12</sup>
5. They lifted up their voices – David's sons were overwhelmed by fear and anxiety when they came to talk with their father. They were loud and speaking intensely to him.
6. Wept - In much distress and emotional anguish, they lamented very loudly, weeping before their father uncontrollably as if no one could comfort them.
7. The king and his servants wept very bitterly – Singular, absolute common, masculine/Noun, adverbial, common, masculine – David's son's anguish consumed the room, and David and his servants also cried inconsolably.
8. Absalom fled and went to Talmi the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur – Absalom, realizing the family crisis he created, does not follow the other siblings to his father; instead, he becomes completely resolved to continue heading in another direction for his own safety.
  - a) Two long years passed before Absalom affected 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 urged his father, David, to join him at Baal Hazor (6 miles south of Shiloh), the scene of the festivities, but David declined. Absalom then requested that Amnon attend in

<sup>11</sup> Walton, J. H. (2009). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel* (Vol. 2, p. 462). Zondervan.

<sup>12</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 85). Victor.

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.

9. Absalom fled and went to Talmi the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur – Absalom's actions, coupled with the family's response, left David's household splintered and mourning. David's sin and the judgment God pronounced upon him (2 Sam. 12:10-12) had now impacted his family. As God had declared, the consequences of his sine would permanently alter his household, and it would never be the same.
10. David longed to go to Absalom; finished – David exhausted himself emotionally, perpetually longing for Absalom to be back.
11. David longed to go to Absalom; finished - David still did not use the scriptures to direct his life. The scriptures address revenge, murder, and rape. David ignored it and got into his feelings.
12. He was comforted – David completely recovered from Amnon's death, but Absalom's absence consumed him.
13. However the kings said, let him turn to his own house – The king relented and allowed Absalom to return to the city. He continually gave orders to get this done, but Absalom was not allowed to come nowhere near the king.
  - a) David did nothing to Absalom for killing his brother.
    - He did not see him for five years (13:38-39; 14:24, 28). He saw him only because of his son's persistence.
    - It took Joab sending the woman of Tekoa to David to get David to even invite his son to Jerusalem.
    - David did not give Absalom much attention for forty years (15:6-7).
14. Let him not see my face – David definitely does not want Absalom to ever come anywhere near him.
  - a) David's passive fatherhood created great trouble for a nation (18:6).
15. Did not see the king's face – Absalom was totally prevented from ever coming before the king. This only created more resentment and bitterness in the relationship between David and Absalom and led to the loss of another son and the demise of a nation God had made great.
  - a) Mule apparently the normal mount for royalty in David's kingdom (18:9; 1 Kg. 1:33,38,44). Absalom was the first king to have chariots and horses (15:1).

16. Did not see the king's face – When we prolong dealing with problems in our families, it gives more time and room for Satan to make things worse. A nation almost crumbled because of David's decision.
17. The King was deeply moved – David was trembling with deep emotions (this is a man of war), rising up inside of him. These emotions were so strong that it did not seem like anything could have prevented it from stopping.
18. David went up to the room over the gateway and wept - David, driven by deep, overwhelming emotions, kept returning to a place where he could mourn privately. His emotions were so strong that he wanted to mourn alone.
- a) But why are these depressing stories recorded in Scripture? They are a direct fulfillment of God's punishment for David's sin with Bathsheba as spoken through Nathan the prophet (12:10–11). Like David, Amnon had a moment of sexual incontinence. Like David, Absalom resorted to murder. David was furious, but he took no action because he had been guilty of similar sins (13:21). In the same way Absalom was full of hatred but had no communication with Amnon (13:22).<sup>13</sup>
  - b) David wept when he heard about the death of Jonathan and Saul (1:11–12), the murder of Abner (3:32), and the murder of Amnon (13:33–36), so why shouldn't he weep over the death of his beloved son Absalom? Once again, we see the heart of God revealed in the heart of David, for Christ died for us when we were sinners and living as the enemies of God (Rom. 5:7–10). David would have died for Absalom, but Jesus *did die for us!*<sup>14</sup>
17. He said – David lost a second child, and all he could do was become completely engrossed in his pain while constantly calling his son's name.
18. If only I died instead of you – David, constantly on the move to his room over the gateway, kept making himself walk, saying, "On my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!" David is totally devastated by Absalom's death.
- a) David's passive fatherhood led to his son's death (18:14; 1 John 5:16).
  - b) David's retreat after the news of Absalom's death into one of these rooms places him in a position to see the disposition of his army while still having privacy. The fact that he did not go back into the city suggests his awareness of the delicate political situation, while at the same time indicates he is not ready to resume his regular schedule.<sup>15</sup>
  - c) City gates had numerous rooms where commercial, civic, or military affairs could be conducted. David's retreat to one of the rooms afforded him a place where he could

<sup>13</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 124). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>14</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be restored* (p. 115). Victor.

<sup>15</sup> Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament* (electronic ed., 2 Sa 18:33). InterVarsity Press.

weep in relative privacy. His withdrawal from his position sitting in the gate to one of the rooms of the gate tower reflects the fact that he is “shaken” by news of Absalom’s death, as his anguished fivefold repetition of “my son” and threefold repetition of “Absalom” aptly capture. Walton, J. H. (2009). Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel (Vol. 2, p. 471). Zondervan.

19. If only I died instead of you – *“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul.”* (Mk. 8:35-36)