

A Bible Story Discussion – The Rape of Tamar

2 Samuel 13:1-22 (Reading dramatically helps us hear the different voices in the text. The following dramatic reading is taken from the NIV Version of the Bible)

Reader #1: In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

Reader #2: Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?"

Reader #1: Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

Reader #2: "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.'"

Reader #1: 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."

Reader #2: David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him."

Reader #3: 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. Then she took the pan and served him the bread.

Reader #1: But he refused to eat. "Send everyone out of here," Amnon said.

Reader #2: So everyone left him.

Reader #1: Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand."

Reader #3: And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.

Reader #1: But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister."

Reader #3: "Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. 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."

Reader #2: But he refused to listen to her.

Reader #1: And since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

Reader #2: Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her.

Reader #1: Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"

Reader #3: "No!" she said to him. "Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me."

Reader #2: But he refused to listen to her.

Reader #1: He called his personal servant and said, "Get this woman out of here and bolt the door after her."

Reader #2: So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing a richly ornamented robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.

Reader #3: Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe your initial reactions to the passage. What do you notice or what stands out to you?
2. Take a closer look at the following characters one character at a time and answer the following questions for each one: Amnon, Jonadab, Tamar, Absalom and King David
 - a. What was this person's station in life? Would you say that they were a powerful person, why or why not?
 - b. Summarize this person's actions in this story. What did they do?
 - c. Note the choices that each character made at different points in the story (Leading up to the rape, the rape itself, the response afterward). What other choices might have been made instead? How might those alternate choices have changed the outcome of the story?
3. What is similar or different about the way rape happens this story and in our current culture today? What is similar or different about the way rape is responded to in this story compared to our culture today?
4. What can we take away from this case study?

**The Following Myths and Facts about Rape from
Michigan State University Sexual Assault Program
Counseling Center
517-355-3551
www.endrape.msu.edu**

Myth: Women lie about being raped.

Fact: Rape is the most underreported crime of all. The rate of “false reports” or false allegations of rape is 2% - 3%, no different than that for other felonious crimes.⁷

Myth: Men are not raped.

Fact: 1 in 6 men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.⁸ They can and are raped for similar reasons as women are raped...power and control. Men can be assaulted by women and by other men.

Myth: Most people are raped by strangers.

Fact: Most people are raped by someone they know and trust. Approximately 70% of female rape victims and 74% of male rape victims know their assailant.⁹

Myth: Most rapes are committed by People of Color and/or people from lower social classes.

Fact: Rapists are from all races, ethnicities, and social classes. 80 to 90% of violent crimes against women are committed by someone of the same race as the victim.

Myth: Sexual assault happens to careless people who are "asking for it" by the way they dress or where they are.

Fact: No one asks or deserves to be assaulted. All kinds of people are sexually assaulted in all kinds of places and at all times. This myth shifts the blame from the perpetrator to the victim of this crime.

Myth: Someone who was drinking or drunk when sexually assaulted is at least partially to blame.

Fact: Alcohol is the #1 date-rape drug, and a perpetrator uses alcohol and other date-rape drugs to incapacitate their target. As a community, we can all do things to reduce our risk. However, NO ONE is responsible for preventing rape except for those who perpetuate it. Rapists are the only people who can be blamed for rape.

Myth: Men rape women because they are sexually aroused by them, or have been deprived of sex.

Fact: Most rapists have consensual sex frequently, and rape is not necessarily motivated by sex. Rape is fueled by the desire for power and control over others.

⁷ Schafran, L.H., 1993. Writing and reading about rape: A primer. *St. John's Law Review*, 66, 979- 1045.

⁸ National Institute of Justice, 2002

⁹ Bureau of Justice Statistics (2003). *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.