



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES: Part 2***

### **TAMAR: LESSON 9**

I'm curious to know how many of you ladies have heard of Tamar, the lady we'll be reading about this week. I find it fascinating that many haven't. It's as if her story has been kept private, like a family secret. It's a shameful story, a black mark on David's family name. It's not an easy story to hear. It's one of those where the victim appears to receive no justice for the crime against her, which makes our blood boil. Every time I read it I must remind myself that God is a God of justice, and even though the Scripture text doesn't satisfy my own longing for it, He has His way in the end. I trust Him with that, but it's hard.

I also know that the story is going to be difficult for many of you to read. Many women have been the victim of sexual and non-sexual violence, including rape, domestic violence, and reported and unreported assaults. Many have progressed through their healing process, while it may still be very fresh for others. I literally put my pen down four times as I tried to begin to write about Tamar; not wanting to talk about it, not wanting to discuss what's happening in our world, and not wanting it to bother those of you who have similar stories as our woman of the week. But God kept reminding me of Proverbs 31:8-9, which says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and the helpless, and see that they get justice." The writing of this lesson is, for me, a way to speak up for Tamar and others like her. We see you, we acknowledge your pain, we want to listen to your story, and we will pray for your healing. We will speak up for you, even if you can't. Sexual violence must stop. Domestic violence must end. All violence against women must end. In the U.S., about one in four women has been the victim of serious physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner. Worldwide, the figure is nearly one in three. We cannot pretend it's not happening. It's been suggested that perhaps the first step simply may be acknowledging it rather than looking the other way in our churches, communities, and the news. Rather than turning the TV off, confronting evil is what we are called to do. It's an uncomfortable truth, that's for sure. But let's speak up, shall we? Tamar, this is for you. We are appalled at what happened to you; we recognize and are attempting to understand the pain



the most prestigious. Because of his many wives and concubines, there were many half brothers and sisters. Although marrying each other wasn't encouraged or accepted in the Pentateuch (Leviticus 18:9-11; 20:17; Deut. 22:28), it was frequently done.

4. What are your first thoughts about the story? Questions?

We'll stop here for now. I'm praying that God does something amazing in our hearts this week and stirs us to pray more, stand up more, listen more, see more ... and "feel" more. Are ya ready?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "However, he would not heed her voice, and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her." **2 Samuel 13:14** (I know this is a tough verse, but it's been said that this verse is a Biblical definition of injustice. I think it's an important one to know. Injustice is when someone more powerful or stronger takes advantage of or exploits those who are weak or powerless.)

### **Second Day**

#### **Work on your memory verse.**

1. Let's take a step back and look at what happened right before our story. Read 2 Samuel 11-12:1-25. In your own words, summarize the storyline, including the various sins that David was guilty of.
2. Read 2 Samuel 13:1-14. The text says that Amnon "loved" Tamar. Can you think of a better word that describes what he felt?
3. Who is Amnon? Who was his mom?
4. Amnon was burning with lust for his half-sister. Who came along to offer some advice? What is he referred to as?

Have you ever heard the phrase, “With a friend like that who needs enemies”? Jonadab fits that phrase to a tee! The man doesn’t deserve to be called a friend. Most scholars believe that Tamar was simply out of Amnon’s reach. As a royal princess and a virgin, she was probably closely watched by the harem eunuchs. She most likely lived in the women’s quarters and couldn’t go outside unless accompanied by other women and/or guards. Amnon probably thought it was near impossible to get Tamar alone. And obviously, she didn’t share the same sexual interest.

5. Why didn’t Amnon just ask David if he could marry her? Any thoughts?
  
6. Amnon thought the plan sounded good. Do you think Amnon would have done this terrible act if his cousin hadn’t suggested it?

During that time, the king’s children lived in different houses, or different areas in the palace, with their moms. They remained together, yet separate.

7. Can you think of any real situation in your life, past or present, in which there was a “behind the scenes” person suggesting and encouraging wrongdoing? Did you take their counsel? What was the result?
  
8. Tamar obeyed her father and went to Amnon. I wonder if she felt weird about it. Did Tamar seem to suspect anything?
  
9. As Amnon grabbed her, how did she respond? What did she appeal to as she pleaded with him?

The phrase “force me” in verse 12 is better translated as “do not humble me.” Tamar seems to quote from Genesis 34:7. Hebrew women regarded their chastity as the crown of their honor. This act would completely disgrace her!

Amnon's lust overcame him. Lust is not love, but simply the gratification of some animal passion. Lust is also defined as "evil desires." Innocent people usually get hurt when we indulge ourselves with the object of our lust. (And it's usually the ones we love!)

10. Besides sex, what other things can become the object of our lust? Can you give some examples?

11. Read the following verses. What do they say about lust?

a. Romans 13:14

b. 1 Timothy 6:9-11

c. Titus 2:11-14

d. 1 Peter 2:11-12

e. Galatians 5:16-18

f. 1 John 2:16

12. Are you lusting over someone or something right now? What can be some of the consequences if you allow yourself to indulge? Who will it hurt, besides God, and you?

13. When we realize we are committing the sin of "lust," what should we do, according to 1 John 1:9?

Let's end here for now. I pray you allow the Holy Spirit to search deep into your heart to see if there are any "evil desires" lurking in there. It's easy for a simple desire to turn into an evil one. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24

### **Third Day**

#### **Study your memory verse.**

Before Amnon brutally rapes his half-sister, Tamar pleads with him, appealing to his humanity and then to his self-esteem. If he insists on violating her, she says, he will reduce himself to a fool. She knows, that he knows, that such an act is forbidden for the people of Israel, who drew a large distinction between themselves and its Canaanite environment, especially in the realm of sexual conduct. But all Amnon cared about was self-gratification.

1. Read 2 Samuel 13:1-20 again. In verse 15, what does his lust turn into? Why?
  
2. Why didn't she want to be sent away?
  
3. When he called his servant to remove her, what did he call Tamar?

F.B. Meyer wrote, "Tamar was expelled from Amnon's house as though she had been the aggressor. Unholy love often turns to violent hate. Shame, remorse, gluttony, fear, all combined make Amnon treat her with this sudden revulsion of feeling." Amnon was callous, unremorseful, and hateful. He wouldn't even use her name.

Once she had been violated, she was now a shamed woman. If she was no longer a virgin, no one would want her, no one would marry her, even if she was a king's daughter. To cast her out after raping her was almost worse than raping her, because it meant the crime continued. Forever. She could never have children or live a normal life. As far as how people would see her, she would become an outcast, an unwanted, used object. Amnon didn't just steal her virginity, he stole her very life. Someone said that Amnon treated her like an orange ... he ripped a hole in it, sucked out the juice, and then threw it in the garbage. My heart breaks for her.

4. Can you try to describe the pain she must have felt?

Obviously Amnon didn't love Tamar. His selfish and cruel behavior is the very opposite of the definition of God's love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Allyson McKinney wrote, "Violent abuse can never trace its origins to love. Instead, violence expresses lust for power and control; an unjustifiable desire to dominate another person made in the image of God."

5. Read verses 18-20. What does it say about Tamar's robe? As the servant threw her out, what did she do as signs of her profound grief and despair? Who did she run to?
  
6. Most think her robe was similar to Joseph's robe of many colors in Genesis 37:3. It was probably a richly embroidered outer garment. This robe was a sign of favor and special affection. Kind of interesting that they refer to this "robe of many colors" twice. Why do you think that's an important fact?
  
7. What did her brother tell her to do? (Remember that Absalom is a full brother.) How do you think that made her feel?

So ... it was nice that Absalom took her into his house. She probably felt a moment of relief that someone was in her court. But then to tell her not to worry about it and let it go? Be quiet for now? I don't know about you, but to me, those words would cause even more damage. Talk about not getting any justice! Poor Tamar! Would nobody help her?

8. Here's an interesting question. How do you think God felt about Tamar's situation? What would He have said to her?

9. Amnon destroyed young Tamar. Have you ever felt destroyed by someone? Perhaps a violent act such as rape, or cruel words that have left deep scars, or a betrayal that you've never gotten over. How do you think God felt about what happened to you? What do you think God would say to you as well?

I pray that you know how much God loves you and is weeping over your pain. He sees you and knows you. He wants to heal and restore you. He wants to make beauty out of your ashes. Will you let Him? The tragedy doesn't have to define you, it doesn't have to control you and hold you as a prisoner. If it still is holding your thoughts and heart captive, He wants to set you free. He wants to heal the broken hearted; He wants to bind our wounds and replace the pain with joy. I'm praying that very thing for each of you ... each of us ... right now.

#### **Fourth Day**

#### **Memory Verse?**

1. Let's start by reading 2 Samuel 13:20-22. When Tamar's father David heard about what happened, what did he do?

The New King James simply says that David was angry. The Septuagint (traditional Greek Old Testament) adds this sentence, "But he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, since he was his firstborn." The Reformation Study Bible says, "That David was furious at Amnon's violation of Tamar is understandable; that he took no disciplinary action is not."

Tamar lived in a world where her powerful father and brothers should have been watching over her, since they had the responsibility of protecting her. Tamar had abundant privilege, but not much power. Our text doesn't say that David did anything to resolve the situation or punish Amnon. In fact, further reading shows us that he never did. Instead of confronting the issue, he protected his son rather than his daughter. In other words, he protected the abuser rather than the victim. It's hard to even guess how much damage that came from David's lack of action.

2. Back on day two, we read the story of David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Do you think this had anything to do with the way he handled Tamar's situation?



3. So Tamar is raped, humiliated, and disgraced by one brother, told to keep it quiet by the next, and then betrayed by her father. Now ... how do you think she must have been feeling?
  
4. Absalom gets his revenge two years later. Read about it in verses 23-39 and summarize the story in your own words.
  
5. How do you feel about Absalom's revenge? Be honest. Do you think things could have been different if David would have handled it differently?
  
6. Have you ever handled a situation poorly, or looked the other way in a situation that you needed to act upon? Can you share? What were the consequences? Looking back, what would you do differently?
  
7. As a parent, what can you learn from David's example in this story? (He often ignored the behavior of his sons.) What can happen to our children if we ignore their bad behavior? Briefly explain the role of the parent in regard to helping children learn to take responsibility for their actions.

8. Although my first response was that Amnon deserved what he got, I know that two wrongs don't make a right. What "should" Absalom have done?

We don't hear any more about Tamar other than that she remained desolate in her brother's home. We know Absalom named his daughter Tamar, possibly to honor her (2 Samuel 14:27). We don't know if she ever recovered from her trauma. I hope so, but we just don't know. Your story is still being written, though. If you don't feel that you've worked through your trauma, pray about seeking help from a trained counselor, as well as saturating yourself in God's Word. He wants to restore you and make you whole. He wants you to know you are valuable to Him, that you're fearfully and wonderfully made. Joni Eareckson Tada wrote, "With adequate support and care, a person who has experienced the broken trust and personal violation of sexual abuse can be restored to a place of knowing his or her identity as a treasured child of the heavenly Father."

9. How do you usually handle the devastating events in your life? Remain desolate like Tamar? Seek revenge like Absalom? Do nothing like David? What's the Biblical way to handle the trials in our life?

10. I really feel the Holy Spirit leading me to ask this question, although it's not an easy one to answer. Have you ever sought revenge for something that was done to you? What was the result of it? Are you thinking or planning to take matters into your own hands right now? What can you learn from this story? (Did the murder of Amnon help Tamar in any way?)

The next few chapters talk about the plight of Absalom and his rebellion against his father. He led a revolt and overtook the royal city of Jerusalem and forced his dad to flee. (I wonder if harboring that bitterness against Amnon for two years had anything to do with it? He actually accuses David of withholding justice in 2 Samuel 15:4-6.) If you want to read more of this story, please do! It's pretty horrible. Absalom rapes ten of David's concubines on a roof top, in full

view of the city. He dishonors them just as his sister had been dishonored. Pretty ironic. And sick. Although David was known as a man after God's heart, he wasn't the best parent, obviously. But Scripture never tells us that David was a perfect man, just a man who loved God with his whole heart.

Tomorrow we'll look at a few more lessons we can learn from what happened to Tamar. If you're a parent, take heed! If you've been violated, take heart! If you are seeking revenge, take a step back! Allow God to direct you, heal you, and change your heart.

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. What can you learn from Absalom's life regarding harboring bitterness? Do you have bitterness growing in your heart towards someone? What does Romans 12:18-20 tell us? How does hatred "eat your soul"?
2. What can happen if we allow pain to dominate our life?
3. Amnon's cousin was a powerful, negative influence on his life. Do you have anyone in your life that influences you negatively? What should you do?
4. Unwise counsel is ... unwise! Sometimes in the middle of temptation we fail to realize how bad the counsel is because we can be guilty of rationalizing it. What can we do to assure we are getting good counsel?

