

2 Samuel 13-18 David forgives

Absalom

2 Samuel 13-18

Based on NLT (2004)

Transition

David was king and had a large family. He lived in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 13:1-2

Now David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister...And...*another brother*, her half brother, fell desperately in love with her. *He* became so obsessed with *her* that he became ill...

Transition: *Later, he pretended to be ill and requested that she come to serve him.*

2 Samuel 13:11-15

But as she was feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded, "Come to bed with me, my darling sister."

"No, my brother!" she cried. "Don't be foolish! Don't do this to me...Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me."

But *he* wouldn't listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her...

2 Samuel 13:21-39

When King David heard what had happened, he was very angry. And though Absalom never spoke to *his brother* about this, he hated *him* deeply because of what he had done to his sister.

Two years later, when Absalom's sheep were being sheared...Absalom invited all the king's sons to come to a feast...Absalom kept on pressing the king until he finally agreed to let all his sons attend...So Absalom prepared a feast fit for a king. Absalom told his men, "Wait until *my brother* gets drunk; then at my signal, kill him! Don't be afraid. I'm the one who has given the command. Take courage and do it!" So at Absalom's signal they murdered *him*...And David mourned many days for his son...Absalom fled to his grandfather, *in another land*. He stayed there...for three years. And King

David, now reconciled to *his son's* death, longed to be reunited with his son Absalom, *but he did nothing to bring him back.*

Transition: *The leader of the army realized how much David wanted to be reunited with his son, so he finally convinced David to let him bring Absalom back...*

2 Samuel 14:23-24

Then *the army chief*...brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. But the king gave this order: "Absalom may go to his own house, but he must never come into my presence." So Absalom did not see the king.

2 Samuel 14:25-33

...Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years, but he never got to see the king...Then at last David summoned Absalom, who came and bowed low before the king, and the king kissed him.

Transition

Later Absalom led a rebellion and tried to take over as king in the place of his father, King David. Absalom was killed in the final battle of the rebellion. Someone brought the news to David.

2 Samuel 18:29-33

"What about young Absalom?" the king demanded. "Is he all right?"

And the *messenger* replied, "May all of your enemies, my lord the king, both now and in the future, share the fate of that young man!"

The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to a room...and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son."

Why This Story?

This story is part of a forgiveness story set. It shows that it is possible to forgive some pretty horrible family situations. There are a number of people who would be struggling with the same issues that come out in this story. This story also shows the consequences of not forgiving—pretending until the opportunity for revenge occurs, a typical response in many cultures.

Story Crafting

There are a number of names in this story. We did not name Amnon or Tamar. If your people have difficulty keeping the characters straight, you might want to name these characters. We named Absalom because he appears in other stories.

In order to keep the focus of the story on David's forgiving Absalom, we omitted the details of the cousin who suggested how Amnon could rape Tamar. We also omitted her actions after the rape.

David did grieve Amnon's death. He also grieved Absalom's death. It is important to include his grief.

Absalom's grandfather is his maternal grandfather. You may need to stipulate this if it isn't clear to your group.

Many cultures have ways of giving bad or sad news that avoid directly speaking the words, such as in this story- **May all of your enemies, my lord the king, both now and in the future, share the fate of that young man!** Be sure that your group understands that Absalom was killed.

You may need to find culturally appropriate ways to discuss the rape and murder.

See the story entitled **Absalom's Rebellion** if you wish to fill in the transition in this story with a complete story.

Intra-Story Cohesion

This story comes late in David's reign. His children are grown.

This story is part of a forgiveness set, but if you want to tell a more complete set of David stories, you would want to include a story about the woman's story who convinced David to bring back Absalom (2 Samuel 14:1-24), and a story about Absalom's rebellion.

Worldview

This story deals with rape and murder. Some cultures may find it difficult to talk about these topics in mixed company. You may need to tell this story with groups of men and women separated.

Many cultures solve the problem by having the raped woman marry her rapist. Thus Tamar's suggestion that she and Amnon marry is not strange to many peoples.

At this time and earlier, it was common to marry a half sibling. For example, Abraham married Sarah who was his half-sister.

Some cultures will be disturbed that David did not punish either son. Other cultures will see the lack of punishment for the rape as normal but not understand David's forgiveness of Absalom or his grief at losing either son. Allow the group to wrestle with these points.

Story Set Themes

Forgiveness

Family relationships

Father/Son

Raising children