

Godly relationships

Vision: to understand that sexual and other forms of violence can happen to anyone and are never the victim/ survivor's fault; that violence can be prevented and must be challenged; and that restoration is possible for survivors.

Preparation: *If you or someone you are close to has survived violence, please consider and take advice from trusted friends and/ or professionals on whether it is wise to complete this session. If you think the session may be upsetting but you still want to do it, ensure you are somewhere that you feel safe and have support around you. When facilitating on this topic, be aware also that someone in your group might have experienced violence without you knowing it and think through who they could go to for counselling and/or prayer. Recommended professional services in our area around Bath include: <http://south-side.org.uk/> (for domestic abuse); and <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help> (for broader relationship support).*

Video: watch this after question 5, before you think about the implications for our own church and community <https://youtu.be/YPEUNeoGhj0> (7:38)

2 Samuel 13:1-22 – the rape of Tamar

Questions to discuss:

Ask a volunteer to keep note throughout the discussion of any possible actions mentioned

1. What caused the rape of Tamar? Reflect on the roles of men and women in the family structure and social context.
2. What did each of the men do in the story, before and after the rape?
3. What could each have done differently? (Amnon, Jonadab, Absalom, David)
4. What were the consequences of the rape for Tamar and the other key people in the story? What would have enabled Tamar to begin to heal and move forward?
5. Do you know any similar stories in your community? Where can a survivor of sexual violence find support in our community? (Tamar had nowhere to go for real help.)
6. What can we do to make sure that survivors of sexual violence are supported, are not judged and feel able to report acts of violence against them?
7. What can we do to stop sexual violence and other forms of abuse happening within families in our communities?

Act of Love: Create space at the end for participants to pray over the different actions that were noted down and ask God what He wants us to do as a group or church.

Going deeper:

Watch this video about gender-based violence globally: <https://youtu.be/eWhNv4cgCUc> (2:42)
And find out more by looking at the great resources at: <https://www.restored-uk.org/>

Notes for facilitator:

- *Tamar's rape resulted from Amnon's lust and the failure of Jonadab and David to protect her. She had to obey her father; those who had the chance to protect her did not. Amnon had the power to send everyone out the room.*
- *Jonadab gave terrible advice. David ordered Tamar to do as her brother said. Amnon raped her. After the rape, Absalom and David were angry about the disgrace to their family. Absalom gave Tamar a home but failed to comfort her or to allow her to process her suffering – he silenced her and hid her away. David did nothing - Amnon was also his son and he probably did not want the family to be shamed.*
- *Each could have reacted differently: Amnon could have restrained his desire or spoken to the king and married her honourably, as Tamar suggested. Jonadab should have advised him to do one of those two things. Absalom could have helped Tamar to get justice, showing people she was an innocent victim instead of treating her as if she were to blame. David could have secured justice for Tamar, welcoming her back into his house and punishing Amnon.*
- *Tamar ended up a disgraced, 'desolate woman'. She had to go and live under the protection of her brother. She was in great psychological pain and suffering. The rape also led to a whole train of consequences for the wider family because they failed to respond effectively at the time: Absalom murdered Amnon and ended up in exile, separated from his family.*
- *She could have begun a process of healing if she had had people she could talk to about her rape, a support group and someone to pray with her – nowadays she could be linked to professional care and counselling.*

Sexual and other forms of violence can happen to anyone and are never the victim/ survivor's fault. Violence can be prevented and must be challenged in our communities. Other types of violence can also be very damaging, including emotional and physical abuse.

Restoration is possible for survivors where they are supported by their family, community and have access to professional services where needed.