

## The Fathering No

**King David in the Bible had a large family and he loved his children but he did not discipline them and therefore they never experienced his love. King David – maybe a modern dream come true – he never had a cross word with any of his children. He never dressed them down – certainly no smacking – but this turned out to be catastrophic fathering for his children. They never experienced his love.**

**Do you want to experience a father's love? Then, listen – Proverbs 3:11: “ ... do not despise ... discipline ... ” Do not wish for a father like King David. God himself is a Father to you and – Proverbs 3:12: “ ... the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father ... ”**

**Much went wrong in King David's household. I read from the Bible – 2 Samuel 13:1-4: “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. Now Amnon had a friend [his cousin] named Jonadab ... 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?’ Amnon said to him, ‘I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.’”**

**King David had children from a number of wives and when they were growing into young adults – in the course of time – the oldest son Amnon fell in love with his half-sister Tamar (whose brother was Absalom). He was so smitten by the beauty of Tamar and – then – so consumed by his passion for her that unfulfilled desire made him sick. He couldn't sleep. He couldn't eat. When his cousin noticed, he asked him: “Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?” Amnon said: “I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.”**

**There it was. The truth was out. It was an impossible situation because the law forbade what Amnon wanted. God made the matter crystal-clear in the Bible – Leviticus 18:9: “Do not have sexual relations with your sister, [even when she is your half-sister] ... ” Yet, Jonadab was Amnon's friend and as a friend he was feeling Amnon's pain. How can the law be right when he loves her so much? Surely, God must make an exception here. Did not even Abraham marry his half-sister (Sarah)? And – then – Amnon was an important person – the king's son. You don't want to say “no” to a man of influence because it may cost you.**

**Jonadab thought about his answer to Amnon but when he spoke, he failed him. Amnon – at this early stage of his infatuation – needed an immediate rebuke – strong words: “Snap out of this fixation. Put her out of your head. Take a cold shower. Chop wood and cheer up.” Yet, Jonadab indulged Amnon and – instead of bringing correction to him – he showed him the way deeper into sin.**

**I read – 2 Samuel 13:5-14:**

“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.*”

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.’ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: ‘Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.’ 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, but he refused to eat.

‘Send everyone out of here,’ Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, ‘Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.’ And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his

bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, my sister.’

‘No, 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.’ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.”

**Did Amnon not say to Jonadab: “I’m in love with Tamar”? How could love turn into rape? Did Amnon confuse feelings of lust with love? What happened? One answer is that if you do not rebuke a small sin early, then it keeps growing into something worse. Jonadab – his friend – had the chance to rebuke Amnon early but he did nothing. On the contrary – he helped Amnon to feed his lust for Tamar and – before long – Amnon was feeding like a predator – scheming to have her come and bake food for him in his chambers – using and deceiving his father David in the process. He could not stop fantasizing about her and – in the end – his desire became uncontrollable.**

**When – at long last – he was alone with Tamar, he asked her: “Come to bed with me, my sister.” But what was he thinking? Tamar had come to him because she thought that she was caring for a sick brother. She had been working – taking dough, kneading it, making the bread in his sight, baking it, serving him the bread on a pan. She did not know that lustful eyes had been watching her. She did not know that she was innocent prey. Yet – and this is what happens when small sins are allowed to keep growing – Amnon was consumed with his lust – overpowered. He could think of nothing else and therefore – in his imagination – surely – others – (Tamar) – must be like him: “Come to bed with me, my sister.”**

**Poor Tamar. She tried to fend him off, saying: “No, my brother! Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing.” When he did not listen, she changed her tack and promised marriage to him. She reasoned with him: “Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.” Tamar reminded Amnon that their father – King David – would do anything for his children. She was now willing to become his wife – anything but being disgraced. (And is this not what he had wanted?)**

**Only – Amnon was too far gone. He could not wait – not even for a wedding – because waiting would have required a measure of discipline and he had none left. He had to have her – here and now. According to the Bible – “ ... he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.”**

**Rape is a soul-destroying crime. It is evil and – here – it is the outcome of unchecked passion for a half-sister that had always been out of bounds for the eldest son of the king. Amnon should not have lusted after Tamar. He should not have fantasized about her until the desire for sex became uncontrollable. Yet, do we learn from him? Do you think that we are any different from Amnon? I hope so but – on the other hand – look at our culture. Who checks our passion when we are lusting after things that are out of bounds? Who is holding you accountable? It is best for us when discipline comes early – before we are hooked on our sin – but look at what we read and watch on TV. There is no discipline. Our grand-parents – in their time – never even saw a naked belly-button on TV. This was against the moral code but then we relaxed and began to show more and more naked flesh and more and more simulated sex on mainstream TV and now we push the boundaries even further and the sex is no longer simulated but real.**

**Consider this article:**

Actual Sex in Mainstream Cinema ... the world’s hottest current cinematic trend ... It wasn’t until the late 1990s and into the 21st century that hard core sex in mainstream cinema started to become recognized as legitimately artistic, and with a wider appeal than ever before. The French came out with guns blazing ... everything from bland oral sex to perverse penetrative sex ... And then there was ... New Zealand actress Kerry Fox briefly putting a penis in her mouth ... there is intelligence and imagination at work ... the portrayal of graphic sexuality in mainstream cinema is continuing to be pushed. The content may be arguable, the intent questionable, but there is no doubt graphic sexuality has a place in mainstream cinema ... Michael

Winterbottom argues that if you have a film about an athlete, he's gonna have to do some running from time to time, so if a film is about a sexual relationship then graphic sex is demanded ... ” (<http://www.freshmag.com.au/sexinthecinema.html>).

**The trend is the same that Amnon experienced and that led to his rape of Tamar. A small sin was allowed to grow into a big sin. Where will the hottest trend in modern cinema end up? The article from before makes this prediction. I quote:**

“Reality TV has a lot to answer for. With the demand for realism and fly-on-the-wall observation escalating, the craving for arousal and confrontation will creep higher and higher. And the ante can only be upped in two directions; sex and violence. Imagine a future where the two biggest shows on television are PornTV and SnuffTV. It may sound far-fetched, but versions of this kind of perversion are not far off.”

**Our culture is very much like Amnon's friend and cousin Jonadab: Instead of bringing correction – we show people the way deeper into sin. Tamar was raped and we allow people to feast on pictures like these:**



**Our culture is making rape sexy and people excuse themselves for enjoying the pictures. “These women look so hot in death and suffering.” Then – in 2009 – the Amazon internet store sold a video game – “Stockholm: An Exploration of Love” – where the player is in the position of a kidnapper with the goal of physically and mentally torturing a woman – and that includes raping her – in order to get her to fall in love with him.**

**Is this bad? One book author (Kota Ozembwe) writes:**

“When I first saw *Stockholm: An Exploration of True Love*, my first response was not ‘Oh my God, this is soo extreme.’ Instead, I thought ‘Here is a video simulation that is almost as graphic as the average romance novel.’ I have been writing erotic fiction for a few years, but I have been reading it a lot longer. I have read a lot of kidnapping, rape, torture, forced homosexual acts, etc. I have read works ... in which the main character (Beauty) is forced to do all kinds of sexually humiliating things. I have read popular works by less famous writers that are even more graphic, but often just as brilliant.”

**What is so brilliant about rape that we entertain the idea in books, video games, ads and movies? How far down the track have we come as a culture? Amnon – in the Bible – went all the way but – then – was in for a surprise. I read from the Bible – 2 Samuel 13:14-15: “ ... he raped her. Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, ‘Get up and get out!’”**

**Amnon – after all of his fantasizing and scheming – did what he wanted to do but – in the words of a song for our time – did not get any satisfaction. Why? His love turned into hatred. His lust turned into loathing. Why? I am not a psychologist but what happiness can come from rape? He loved her purity – her beauty – the way she was baking for him – yet, his violence destroyed her and destroyed what he loved about her. He may have released his pent-up urgings but there was no intimacy and no love touched his soul.**

**He was like a racing dog chasing the fake rabbit. He finally caught up with the contraption but there was nothing there and he became angry. He may have resented the power that Tamar had wielded over him. He may have resented that he had pined for her – until he became sick. Maybe Amnon hated himself for committing such a sin as raping his sister and now – somehow – he blamed it on her. He may have hated her for “making him” do it.**

**I am not exactly sure about what was going on inside Amnon but this is also where we are heading in the Western world. We let our lust go to the extreme and then face up to a lot of angry people who find out that what has been glittering on television does not keep what has been promised. Lust – rape – is only ever going to disappoint the perpetrator.**

**And then there was Tamar. Before we commiserate too much with Amnon and the Amnons in our culture, we share the pain of Tamar. I continue the story from the Bible – 2 Samuel 13:15-21:**

“Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, ‘Get up and get out!’ ‘No!’ she said to him. ‘Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.’ But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, ‘Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.’ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, ‘Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.’ And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious.”

**Tamar suffered rape, then abandonment, then the silence of her brother and – worst of all – her dad – King David. He was furious with Amnon but never opened his mouth and never exercised any discipline. He never acknowledged the wrong that was done to his darling daughter.**

**Then, Tamar did what should happen a lot more among us. She had no power but at least she could weep in public. Her open grief would at least bear witness to the crime that was committed. Just imagine that every time a woman was sexually abused in Toowoomba, she would tear her clothes and weep publicly. Tamar did: “Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.” Maybe we should begin to do this as a church. We don’t need to lecture anyone or try to stem the tide with political campaigns because people find reasons to excuse anything. Maybe we can simply weep and no longer hide our tears. The ashes on our heads – our torn robes – will bear witness to the pain of women among us. Tamar may sit next to you this morning. We are weeping with you.**

**Why did King David not do anything? He was a father that was afraid of discipline. He loved his children so much that he did not want them to become angry with him. In his mind – there was a risk in enforcing boundaries. The children may no longer love their daddy.**

**Yet, the opposite was true and is true today. It was precisely the lack of discipline that estranged David from his children. Tamar felt abandoned by her dad and Amnon had never learned that there was anyone beside himself. He could not love his dad because for him love was lust and lust is selfish. Then, the lack of a father’s discipline also affected the other children. Absalom – Tamar’s brother by the same mother – was beginning to hate his brother Amnon for what he had done and – therefore – in his own way – he attempted to do what the father failed to do – bring correction to Amnon.**

**Yet, he is an interesting case study of what happens when you discipline out of anger and not love. First, he did not speak to Amnon and then – [cf. 2 Samuel 13:24-27: again the father was being deceived] – he invited him to a party where he had him killed when he was tipsy with wine (2 Samuel 13:28-29). Absalom had nursed a grudge, had judged his brother with an unclean heart and now had his vengeance. However, when you judge another person in anger – when you judge another person’s sin in self-righteousness – you – frequently – invite the same judgement on yourself. Sow an angry judgement – judge and discipline without love – and you will reap what you sow. Absalom judged Amnon for his rape – he sowed condemnation – he hated him for what he had done – but – later – Absalom committed rape himself – (the same crime) – in a far worse manner than Amnon himself.**

**He ended up rebelling against his father – (another relationship breakdown between father and one of his sons for lack of discipline) – drove King David out of the capital and – with intended malice – in full view of all the people – raped his father’s concubines – 2 Samuel 16:22: “So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he lay with his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.”**

**If King David had disciplined Amnon in love, Absalom would not have tried to discipline him in anger and – therefore – would have been spared from reaping his angry judgement of rape. If you love someone, do not shy away from discipline but watch your heart. Judge without love and – more often than not – you will reap what you sow. You will commit the same – or worse – sin.**

*[Cf. Romans 2:1-11: “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.” Galatians 6:7; Luke 6:37-38.]*

**Further tragedy included another son – Solomon – who was to succeed David on the throne. The lack of his father’s discipline did not turn him into a rapist but his lust also spiraled out of control. He did not rape and abandon women like Amnon abandoned Tamar but – as king – he also forced himself**

**upon them and – then – abandoned them. He chose what he wanted and put them into the anonymous mass of his wives and concubines – 1 Kings 11:3: “Solomon had seven hundred wives ... and three hundred concubines and his wives led him astray.”**

**Why was King David not a better father? There are no excuses but [he may felt compromised because he shared some of the same faults as his children – committed adultery and even murder (2 Samuel 11) – and] his own experience of being fathered was not brilliant either. When a prophet came to his dad and asked to see all of the sons, his dad lined up all of the boys but did not even bother to call for David (1 Samuel 16). He was the youngest – somewhat neglected – tending the sheep on his own – and his dad thought nothing of having his youngest son protect the sheep by risking his life against lions and bears (1 Samuel 17:34). David did not seem to experience any dotting fatherly love.**

**Then, he married – the king’s daughter. He called his in-laws “dad” and “mum” (1 Samuel 24:11) but this dad also showed him no fatherly love but became jealous of him and then wanted to kill him. Maybe King David wanted his own children to experience a different kind of fathering – more love, more care – and – therefore – he spared them any kind of discipline. Yet, this kind of fathering failed them all.**

**If David had understood more of his own history, he could have learned from the fathering that God provided for him. God had loved David as a man after his own heart – full of passion – full of radical abandonment – (very much like his later sons) – but he disciplined him hard (!) so that his passion would be controlled by a strong character and channeled into worship – loving God – and serving him – against all enemies – as the king of Israel. Consider what God put him through: his father-in-law – the king – twice threw a spear at him, later hunted him with the entire army of Israel in tow, his wife – whom he loved and who loved him – was given in marriage to someone else, in a foreign land he had to fake insanity – with spittle running down his beard – because the people had become suspicious of this refugee, for a time he was living in a cave – with his family also on the run, after a raid on their camp – having again lost everything – his own men prepared to stone him. God did not spare David years of suffering – one hardship after another – solid discipline to form his character for kingship.**

**And this did not estrange him from God but drew him closer toward him. He had nowhere else to turn and learned – even in the greatest distress – 1 Samuel 30:6: “ ... to strengthen himself in the Lord.” God’s discipline made him experience the Father’s love. God taught him to exercise self-control – which was the key to exercise kingship in his own life – so that he would rule over his passions and not his passions over him. God showed him the way of living as his son. David could have fathered his own children in the same way and they may not have ended up as rapists, murderers and abandoned victims. [They would have ended up as true sons of the king who would have had enough self-discipline to step into their inheritance of reigning themselves in the father’s kingdom.]**

**What about us today? How ready are we to take on board the lessons from King David and his children? The Bible clearly spells out that there will be no new season in God without a fresh attempt of fathers to discipline their children. John the Baptist was the man that prepared the people for the coming of Jesus and the kingdom of God and an angel said about him – Luke 1:17: “And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” It was the job of John the Baptist to turn the disobedient to righteousness and to admonish dads to do the same for their children.**

**Yet, he was not popular with everyone – and he may not be popular with us. People – not understanding the consequences – longed for fathers like King David – who would love them but let them go on doing what they wanted. John said to them – Luke 3:8: “ ... do not being to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ ...” For them – it seemed safe to appeal to Abraham. He was an ancestor – long dead but a guarantee of God’s blessings because God promised to look after his descendants. However, John the Baptist insisted that different fathers are needed to prepare for the Lord’s coming. Fathers cannot be like King David or dead ancestors. Fathers must prepare their children with discipline. Otherwise their children can never experience the love of God.**

**This morning – do you believe that? How do you respond when discipline is exercised among us? Do you feel sorry for Amnon when his love for Tamar makes him ill? Do we excuse the sin because we know that the same sin lurks inside of us? Do we automatically side with the “poor sinner” against the “harsh establishment”?**

Once more – **count the cost that King David’s family paid for not exercising discipline:** 1) **The small sin of forbidden love turned into the worse sin of rape.** 3) **Amnon’s lust turned into loathing.** 3) **Tamar was violated and disgraced.** 4) **Absalom exercised discipline in anger and murdered Amnon.** 5) **Absalom reaped the judgement that he sowed and raped his father’s concubines.** 6) **Solomon lost control and slept with a thousand women.** 7) **None of these children felt the love of their dad and none of them loved him.**

**Are you convinced? This morning – do you know that you also need discipline? (So do I.) Do we understand that a father’s love must include correction? The lack of discipline made David’s household an unsafe place of rape and murder. Yet, Jesus put before us a different vision. He said – John 13:35: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” There is no love – there is no mastery over sin – **without discipline.** [Expand on Jesus and his mastery over any selfishness which led him to demonstrate God’s love on the cross.]**

**I think that David Challenor – our evangelist – demonstrates how good fathering works. On Wednesday nights – at the Station St Community Centre – we invite people to a good meal and a time of sharing and prayer after the meal. Everyone is invited – including alcoholics, thieves, pimps and pedophiles – but our love comes with discipline. During the time of the meal and sharing there is a lock-down. No coming and going with the risk of children getting hurt in the driveway. David allows no swearing and no violent tempers. He asks everyone to show respect to our speakers. When a situation threatens to get out of hand, he gives the person a big hug which comes with love but also discipline. The result of this kind of fathering is that now a culture is established where people love to come because it is safe. There is peace over the community. Everyone knows: You will be protected and you will be corrected, that is: empowered to take control over your issues. This is good fathering. This is from God and prepares everyone to receive more from God.**

**I also remember young Brad (16 years old) who was with us in Hopevale. He took off with a group of Aboriginal boys and for hours we did not know where he was. When he came back, we disciplined him with words because we had been worried about him. He could see that this kind of discipline came with love. He was not used to anyone caring enough to know where he was going.**

**Are you ready? When all other fathers fail you, there is God that is committed to being your Father and he is using discipline so that you will experience his love. I read a few more verses from the Bible – Hebrews 12:11: “ ... no discipline seems pleasant at the time, it is [original: but] painful ... ” but it is not as painful as growing up with a father like King David. Hebrews 12:5-7: “ ... the Lord disciplines those he loves, . he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons ... ”**

**In closing – just count the benefits of his discipline:** 1) **Small sins of lust will not turn into rape.** 2) **Lust will not consume you and make you ill.** 3) **You learn victory over sin.** 4) **Lust is selfish but (self-)discipline makes you capable of love.** 5) **Discipline creates a safe environment.** 6) **You learn to love your dad.**

**Are you nursing a hidden sin in your life – like Amnon? Please, you have a Father in heaven. He loves you and he wants you to experience his love. Therefore, accept his discipline. Humble yourself before him. Do not despise him. Do not do your own thing. He loves you and is treating you as sons (and daughters). Accept his discipline. Amen.**

Possible prayer time:

1. Repent for being timid about exercising discipline. Repent for being silent about the Tamars in our midst.
2. Kneel in response to discipline and repent.
3. Return to a loving Father.