

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ABSALOM

2 Samuel 13-18

Ezekiel, Oghenekaro

For a moment, let us picture King David, tears streaming down his cheeks, as he cried out, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (**2 Samuel 18:33**). This lesson will focus on the young man whom David loved so much but never expressed nor did make Absalom know that he loved him so much. This story has got to be one of the saddest in all of scripture. Here are a father and a son, both of whom loved each other, but they died as enemies. It didn't have to be that way. There are undoubtedly some damaged relationships here today. Can we learn some lessons from the story of David and Absalom?

Absalom Biography

Absalom was the third son of King David. King David had many - **2 Samuel 5:13** *And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.* So, we see that David took more concubines and wives. Amid his many wives, he took Uriah's wife which brought calamities and consequence upon his family. He ended up losing four of his sons thereafter,

- His baby, his son, with Bathsheba died.
- Amnon his oldest child was killed by Absalom.
- Absalom, his third son, was killed.
- Adonijah, his fourth son, was executed.

To parents,

- Whatever you do, the children are there, and they see these things, that was same with David (marrying many women and concubines).
- Keep that in mind that children are watching the parents and learning from the parents.

Absalom's mother was Maacah who was daughter of Talmia, the King of Geshur. Maacah was one of King David's many wives. Absalom was first mentioned in **2 Samuel 3:2-3**. However, we learn much more about him in detail starting in **2 Samuel 13**.

2 Samuel 13:1 *And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.* Here we read that Absalom has a beautiful sister named TAMAR. This is his full-blooded Sister. Same Father and same mother.

Point to Note: As typical with polygamous home, David's influence on the life of his children is nothing to write home about. He was always out there winning battles but never won the battle in his own house. Many of us are victim of this. We spend time taking care of the church of God, taking care of other people's children, people's businesses which is not a bad thing, but we neglect our own, our God given responsibility. This was the beginning of failure for David. He never had time for his children, things started going from bad to worse and so on.

HE WAS A YOUNG MAN WITH PROMISE

A Young Man throughout our story, Absalom is presented as a young man. At the end of our story, David was still referring to him as *"the young man Absalom"* (**2 Samuel 18:29, 32**). It is a young world today. A high percentage of our population is young. Youth is a wonderful time, but we need to understand that it is also a time of responsibility. *"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no delight in them'"* (**Ecclesiastes 12:1**). Young or old, *"each one of us will give an account of himself to God,"* an *"account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead"* (**Romans 14:12; 1 Peter 4:5**).

A Promising Youth

Absalom was not only young; he also had great promise. He was a son of a king—and not just any king, but King David, the man after God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**), the sweet psalmist of Israel. As king, David had brought the nation into a closer relationship with God.

Absalom also had good looks. We read in **2 Samuel 14:25**, *"Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him."* Some of us may be amazed by that description. The LB has this paraphrase: *"No one in Israel was such a handsome specimen of manhood as Absalom!"*

The next verse adds an interesting detail. On the crown of his head was a beautiful mane of hair. He only got a haircut once a year. When he did, *"he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight"* (14:26). That is about three pounds! Why

did he weigh his hair? Do we sense some vanity here? Absalom had a likeable personality to go with his handsomeness. Today we would say that he had “*charisma*” “*or swag*”. People loved him (see 15:6)!

The Life of Absalom & David (Mistakes Many make Today)

1. Never Let Issues Linger (Nip It at The Bud)

We learn that Amnon the son of DAVID loved Tamar his half-sister. Amnon was the first son of king David – **2 Samuel 3:2**. Remember, I earlier said that TAMAR is very beautiful, and Amnon loves her and wants to be with her. This goes against God's laws. **2 Samuel 13:2** *And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do anything to her.* Afterward, he raped his own sister. **2 Samuel 13:21** *“But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth”.* King David was very mad, but he did not do anything about it. We read of no punishment to Amnon for doing this. Both Amnon and Tamar are David's children, and he does nothing about it. David did not take care of the problem like he should have. **2 Samuel 13:22** *And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.* King David though was angry but did not about Amnon's sin. **Deuteronomy 22:25-27**.

As parents or leaders, learn to nip issues at the bud before they escalate. Sometimes, we believe that time will heal all wounds. Someone is angry, someone is offended, and we just feel that over time they will heal. We need to talk it out, try and mend fences while you can and ensure the issue is settled once and for all than to assume that no need to talk about it. We do this in our homes often, you offend your husband and because he is laughing with you or eating your food, you feel it is not necessary to say sorry for that hurt and vice versa. The fact the one party decides to let go does not mean they were not hurt, they just wanted to move on. Therefore, when there is an issue in the future, references are made to those events which were not settled.

2. Unforgiveness Is Poisonous

Absalom nursed the anger of what Amnon did to his sister for two full years - **2 Samuel 13:23**, afterward, Absalom tricked his father that he was hosting a party that he wants all his brethren to join him including Amnon. At first David refused but agreed after Absalom's persistence. He eventually asked his servant to kill Amnon after he was fully drunk.

Bitterness and unforgiveness is contagious and poisonous. If you do not let go, it will sting you hard and may be devastating. *Bitterness and unforgiveness is like one drinking poison and expects another person to get hurt.* It destroys you and not the

other party. When you forgive, it gives room for healing and mending fences. Absalom took laws into his hands, and he did what he nursed in his heart for two full years. Is there still bitterness in your heart, this is the right time to let go, if not, it may bite you hard. After killing his brother Absalom fled to his grandfather's place in Geshur where he lived for 3 years away from his father because he was afraid of what he may do to him.

3. Unspoken Affection/Inaction

Meanwhile, David *"longed to go out to Absalom"* (2 Samuel 13:39). David might have longed all he wanted, but without taking action to reconnect with his son, his longings remained as wishful thinking. He could have contacted the king of Geshur to send his son back, but he did not do so until later.

It finally took David's top general, Joab, a military man, to suggest to the king to bring the fugitive son back. Even after Absalom returned to Jerusalem, David sent his son into exile, with the order, *"He must go to his own house; he must not see my face."*

The way to deal with a problem is not to send it away and let it sort itself out. The young prince felt totally rejected and abandoned. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father waited for his wayward boy to return, ran to greet him when he was a distance away, and threw a gala dinner in his honour. But not so with David. He totally ignored Absalom.

Despite being a brilliant military strategist and the greatest psalmist in the land, the man after God's own heart was a failure as a father; his parenting skills was non-existent. He had not taken the trouble to understand the psychopathology of his son, Absalom. Neither did he deal with Tamar's emotional or physical trauma, nor the sin of his eldest son, Amnon.

David loved Absalom, but never told him to his face. If you love your wife, your children, don't hide it, show it to them, let them know.

4. Rebellion

Absalom's life can be described in one word, *"rebellion"*. Absalom probably felt that throughout his whole life, he had been a victim. In all the years of nursing hurt feelings, angry at being neglected, rejected, and abandoned, ideas to overthrow the king were festering.

He now approached people with problems and grievances and promised he could help them. He asked his father permission to go to Hebron. It was just an excuse

because once there, he secretly arranged to have himself proclaimed king. News reached David's ears. And now David began to fear for his own life. David gathered his servants and fled Jerusalem.

Then Absalom laid plans to immediately pursue and attack David's forces, but the idea was abandoned owing to the advice of Hushai. This delay allowed David to gather some soldiers and launch a counterattack. Despite Absalom's treachery, David gave explicit instructions to the generals to "*deal gently*" with Absalom. However, the orders were disobeyed. As Absalom was riding under some trees, his hair became entangled in the branches, and he was left suspended in mid-air. At the same time one of Joab's soldiers happened to be passing by. He informed Joab, who picked up three javelins and thrust them into Absalom's chest. As if that were not enough to kill him, 10 armour bearers were commanded to strike him to make sure that he was truly dead.

More Lessons For us Today

1. **Do not take revenge.** When you are wronged, it does not give you the right to take matters into your own hands, or to seek revenge. The problem with many movie plots is that they are based upon the victims seeking revenge for the wrongs they suffered. But the Lord commands in **Romans 12:19**, "*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'*". Leave it to God to exercise divine retribution.
2. **Deal with pride.** Absalom's pride lay in saying, "*I can rule the country better than my father.*" **Philippians 2:3** instructs, "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves*". If others are more important than us, then we should respect them even if we do not agree with them. Youths always think they know better. We just have to be careful.
3. **Deal with idolatry.** Many of us would consider idol worship as totally against biblical teachings. Yet we may unknowingly entertain idolatry in our hearts. Focus on the 2nd half of the verse **1 Samuel 15:23**, "*For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.*" The Hebrew word for presumption is pawstar, which can be translated presumption, stubbornness, and insistence on one's own way. All these constitute the sin of idolatry. Why is this so? Because stubbornness and insistence on one's way elevates self-will into an idol, which we insist that others must obey.
4. **Deal with rebellion.** Rebellion is different from disobedience. When we disobey, we simply do not carry out what we are instructed. When we rebel, we purposely do the opposite of what we are told. All authority has been placed there by God.

When we rebel, it is not only a rejection of authority, it is a rejection of God Himself.

Conclusion

There is so much to learn about the life of Absalom. We learn how to respond when we are wronged, when we see injustice, when people wrong us. We need to pray for those who have authority over us. Although we may not always agree with their decisions, we need to bestow honour upon them. We need to exercise humility and not insist on our own ways even though we may think we are in the right.

As parents we need to be sensitive to our children's feelings, sensitive to how our words and actions can impact their feelings. We need to make time for them, affirm, encourage, and pray for them to grow in the knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

References

Lessons from a family tragedy by Dr. Leslie Lim (Associate Professor & Senior Consultant Psychiatrist) - <https://www.impact.com.sg/post/2018/03/07/lessons-from-a-family-tragedy-the-psychopathology-of-absalom/>.

Sermon Lessons from Absalom – Joshua Tapp – Web publication (June, 4th 2020) - <https://truewordchristian.org/sermon-lessons-from-absalom/>

A Young Rebel – Absalom by David Roper (Preaching through the bible in a year (2020) – Truth for Today– http://www.biblecourses.com/English/en_lessons/en_202011_11.pdf