

“Touching a father’s heart” 2 Samuel 14

Introduction

1. **Father-Son relationships are like none other.** Many are really special.
 - 2nd Grader: *“My dad is the best dad ever. He taught me how to make a wooden airplane. It was the best plane ever. We are true pals. I would kiss a pig for him.”*
 - 8th Grader: *“One of the funnest times I have had with him was on a camping trip with the boy scouts. We fished, hiked, and carved wood. At night, he snored so loud we thought it was a bear. It was a great experience.”¹*

2. **Parent-Child relationships are important.** Of course, we all know that. But, we sometimes forget that those who are famous and powerful are also people with our kind of feelings and relationships.

Sometimes we see politicians and other leaders only in terms of their public policies and official roles. They sleep, eat, laugh and cry just like the rest of us. And, they deal with family relationships. If anything, it may be particularly difficult to live out family life under the scrutiny of a million analysts. Whether a movie star in a mansion, a Queen in a palace or a President on the second floor of the White House, all face family issues like the rest of us. That’s the way it was with King David.

King with a father’s heart

2 Samuel 14:1

1. **David’s heart was broken.** One of his sons raped one of his daughters and another son murdered his brother to get even. That is more family trauma than most of us will ever experience.
2. **The Old Testament law called for capital punishment of a murderer alth**
3. **ough it seems to have been seldom carried out.** Prince Absalom murdered Crown Prince Amnon and then fled the country to avoid arrest. Princess Tamar became a recluse after she was attacked so David no longer saw her. Prince Amnon was dead so he no longer had him. David lost three children in three directions in two years.
4. **No parent who has lost a child will ever say that the wound has healed—it never completely heals.** However, David’s grief was tempered with time and he yearned to have Absalom back home again. But, if Absalom came home it meant arrest, trial and possible execution. David was stuck between two awful alternatives. His heart ached every day.
5. **One of David’s closest advisors was his military chief of staff, General Joab.** He watched the king and decided that something had to be done. The king was an emotional mess and this was putting the whole kingdom at risk. With Amnon dead and Absalom exiled there was no apparent successor to the throne.
6. **2 Samuel 14:1**
Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king’s heart longed for Absalom.

7. **Joab thought up an elaborate plan to fix the family and the country.**

Wise woman with a persuasive story 2 Samuel 14:2-22

1. **Storyteller**

2 Samuel 14:2-5

So Joab sent someone to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there. He said to her, “Pretend you are in mourning. Dress in mourning clothes, and don’t use any cosmetic lotions. Act like a woman who has spent many days grieving for the dead. Then go to the king and speak these words to him.” And Joab put the words in her mouth.

When the woman from Tekoa went to the king, she fell with her face to the ground to pay him honor, and she said, “Help me, O king!”

The king asked her, “What is troubling you?”

She said, “I am indeed a widow; my husband is dead.

Joab went to Tekoa (ten miles south of Jerusalem in the hills of Judah) to hire an articulate and talented actress. She is called a wise woman because many from Tekoa were called “wise” and because she was a good talker.

Joab gave great attention to detail. Make-up was perfect—actually no make-up. Lines were written and memorized. Gestures were practiced. An appointment was made with the king. She was ready for her performance of a lifetime.

2. **Sad dilemma**

2 Samuel 14:6-7

I your servant had two sons. They got into a fight with each other in the field, and no one was there to separate them. One struck the other and killed him. Now the whole clan has risen up against your servant; they say, ‘Hand over the one who struck his brother down, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed; then we will get rid of the heir as well.’ They would put out the only burning coal I have left, leaving my husband neither name nor descendant on the face of the earth.”

It was a sad dilemma. The local authorities wanted her to hand over her only living son to stand trial and be executed for murder. She would lose her family land and home and be left with neither children nor a place to live. It was legal and we’re always supposed to obey the law, right? What would you do?

3. **Royal ruling**

2 Samuel 14:8-11

The king said to the woman, “Go home, and I will issue an order in your behalf.”

But the woman from Tekoa said to him, “My lord the king, let the blame rest on me and on my father’s family, and let the king and his throne be without guilt.”

The king replied, “If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he will not bother you again.”

She said, “Then let the king invoke the Lord his God to prevent the avenger of blood from adding to the destruction, so that my son will not be destroyed.”

“As surely as the Lord lives,” he said, “not one hair of your son’s head will fall to the ground.”

King David was the supreme judge of Israel. He knew the law but exercised mercy. David gave an executive order to pardon her son and protect him from further prosecution. He believed it was the right thing to do.

4. Getting personal

2 Samuel 14:12-17

Then the woman said, “Let your servant speak a word to my lord the king.”

“Speak,” he replied.

The woman said, “Why then have you devised a thing like this against the people of God? When the king says this, does he not convict himself, for the king has not brought back his banished son? Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.

“And now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. Your servant thought, ‘I will speak to the king; perhaps he will do what his servant asks. Perhaps the king will agree to deliver his servant from the hand of the man who is trying to cut off both me and my son from the inheritance God gave us.’

“And now your servant says, ‘May the word of my lord the king bring me rest, for my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil. May the Lord your God be with you.’”

The woman from Tekoa was a wise woman indeed. She spoke extemporaneously. Her words range over theology, philosophy, politics and family relationships. She is definitely pro-life: *“God does not take life away.”*

Most of all, she dares to confront the king about his own family mess—that he should apply his legal ruling to himself and to Absalom; move on; bring Absalom home.

It was good advice. Not that her story really matched the fratricide in David’s family. Her sons fought and one died—perhaps manslaughter at most. David’s son Absalom plotted the premeditated murder of Amnon for two years—1st degree capital murder for sure. But the advice to reconcile family estrangement was helpful. I know families where people do not speak. Stubbornness is greater than righteousness. It’s time for someone to make the first move and heal the family fracture.

5. Secret strategist

2 Samuel 14:18-22

Then the king said to the woman, “Do not keep from me the answer to what I am going to ask you.”

“Let my lord the king speak,” the woman said.

The king asked, “Isn’t the hand of Joab with you in all this?”

The woman answered, “As surely as you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything my lord the king says. Yes, it was your servant Joab who instructed me to do this and who put all these words into the mouth of your servant. Your servant Joab did this to change the present situation. My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God—he knows everything that happens in the land.”

The king said to Joab, “Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.”

Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honor, and he blessed the king. Joab said, “Today your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant’s request.”

David recognizes the man behind the case—it is General Joab. The wise woman from Tekoa admits that it is a ploy to influence the king and throws in a few lines of flattery to keep his majesty in a good mood.

David agrees: *“Very well, I will do it. Go, bring back the young man Absalom.”* Joab is ecstatic—he has changed the king’s mind. And, he thinks he has saved the kingdom of Israel and preserved the royal succession to the throne. He does not realize that his whole plan will backfire and Absalom will later commit high treason against the king.

Father & son with a problem

2 Samuel 14:23-33

1. “Welcome Home” (sort of)

2 Samuel 14:23-24

Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. But the king said, “He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.

David calls his estranged son Absalom back home to Jerusalem but there are no yellow ribbons on the old olives trees. David refuses to see his son or give him a pass to the royal palace. They are miles closer but still far apart.

2. Everything except integrity

Absalom was a really good looking man. Perfect features. Magnificent long hair. Family man with good-looking children. Winsome. Articulate. An extrovert. He knew how to work a crowd. He was the ideal political candidate. Absalom had everything except integrity—fabulous on the outside and fatally flawed on the inside.

2 Samuel 14:25-32

In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. Whenever he cut the hair of his head—he used to cut his hair from time to time when it became too heavy for him—he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard.

Three sons and a daughter were born to Absalom. The daughter’s name was Tamar, and she became a beautiful woman.

Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king’s face. Then Absalom sent for Joab in order to send him to the king, but Joab refused to come to him. So he sent a second time, but he refused to come. Then he said to his servants, “Look, Joab’s field is next to mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire.” So Absalom’s servants set the field on fire.

Then Joab did go to Absalom’s house and he said to him, “Why have your servants set my field on fire?”

Absalom said to Joab, “Look, I sent word to you and said, ‘Come here so I can

send you to the king to ask, “Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there!”’ Now then, I want to see the king’s face, and if I am guilty of anything, let him put me to death.”

This is more than a dysfunctional family—it’s a dysfunctional royal court! It’s hard to decide whose behavior is worse.

David summons Absalom and then won’t see him for two years—no birthday parties; no T-ball with the grandkids; no Fourth of July barbeque. Zero. What kind of father was David anyway?

Absalom is really annoyed by this rejection so he asks General Joab to mediate again and fix the estrangement. Joab refuses to respond so Absalom sets fire to his field. The murderer has become an arsonist! Israel is in a very dry climate. It was an agricultural society. He could have burned down the whole city and triggered a famine. Anything to get attention! This was crazy!

So, what does Joab do?

3. Dysfunction rewarded

2 Samuel 14:33

So Joab went to the king and told him this. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came in and bowed down with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

Now that was a really good idea, wasn’t it??? Absalom sets a fire to get what he wants and Joab and David both cave in and give him what he wants. Murder and arson and he gets a kiss.

4. What should David have done? Order the trial and execution of his own son? After all, that was the law. It’s hard to imagine many fathers ever doing such a thing.

What should Absalom have done? Let his brother rape his sister and get away with it? No one else was going to punish Amnon so Absalom decided to appoint himself as judge, jury and executioner? Was he supposed to stay alienated from his father for the rest of his life? When your father won’t return calls, when you can’t even speak, isn’t it okay to do something desperate to break the relational log jam?

What should Joab have done? He was stuck between two messed-up family members. Whatever he did wasn’t good enough.

What should have been done? The real answer is that none of this ever should have happened in the first place. Sin piled on sin which triggered more piles of sin until there was no clean and easy way out. That’s what sin does—it entangles and damages a lot of people for a long, long time.

And, we’ll come back to the story next week when the mess gets even messier.

5. Our hearts are heavy for this and every family riddled with sin. We are saddened by all who yearn for a father who is fair and good and loving and righteous. What do we do when our fathers are not the kind of men they are supposed to be?

Conclusion

- 1. Author M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., tells the story of a woman he met who was the result of an unwanted pregnancy.** She struggled with the whole question of how God let this happen. Her mother was a prostitute and her father was unknown. By God’s grace she came to personal faith in Jesus as her Savior, married a godly Christian husband, had wonderful children and lived in a loving and stable home. But she was obsessed by who her father was. It became an issue for family and all of her relationships.

One day she was washing dishes at her kitchen sink with frustration and tears when she blurted out a prayer, “Oh, God, who is my father?”

She says that she heard an audible reply, “I am your father.”

The voice was so clear to her that she spun around to see who had come into her kitchen. No one was there. And then she says she heard it again, “I am your father, and I have always been your father.”²

- 2. Psalm 10:14**

*But you, O God, do see trouble and grief;
you consider it to take it in hand.*

*The victim commits himself to you;
you are the helper of the fatherless.*

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¹ Ken Canfield, “5 Needs of Sons,” Internet post: April 30, 2007, Fathers.com.

² M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey*, Inter Varsity Press, 1993, pages 35-36.