



B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Sexual violence in the Bible — the story of Tamar



Why use this Bible study?

This study can help churches and communities begin to discuss and recognise the harm caused by sexual violence. Sexual violence is often a ‘hidden issue’ and not talked about; this study is aimed at breaking that silence.



2 Samuel 13:1-22

The story of Tamar is a clear account of a planned act of sexual violence. It took place in the house of David. The person responsible is a half-brother, Amnon, who is full of lust towards his half-sister. He admits his passion for her and is advised to create a story that would make it easy for him to have access to her. The sexual violence that results has a severe effect on her. She tears her dress and covers herself with ashes as a symbol of mourning that she has been violated. This story is a strong reminder that sexual violence causes immense pain and suffering, and is an affront to God. It is also an abuse of human rights. Together, in partnership with all survivors of sexual violence, we need to speak out against it and stand firm, praying for justice and restoration of broken relationships.



Key points

- Amnon abused his power and authority to get what he wanted, despite the harm it caused to Tamar.
- The other men in the story did not intervene to protect Tamar. She was ordered to suffer in silence.
- Tamar’s responsibilities as a woman in that household made her vulnerable: she could not refuse to serve or cook for this man and despite being the daughter of King David, she was blamed and shunned.
- Sexual violence can take place anywhere. It is important to raise awareness that survivors are not to blame for the violence.

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

B SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE – THE STORY OF TAMAR

**Questions for discussion**

- Who are the characters in this story and what do we know about them? What is the role of each of the male characters in the story?
- What were the consequences of the act of violence for Tamar?
- What does Tamar say and do? Why does she act in that way?
- Do you think sexual violence can happen within Christian homes and churches?
- What do you think men and women who have been raped think about themselves? How does God view men and women who have been raped? What does God say to them?

**Reflection**

Pray for healing of the pain caused by sexual violence (physical, mental and emotional). Pray for the protection of girls such as Tamar who are vulnerable to sexual violence. Pray for caring and godly men and women who will speak out against sexual violence and seek to protect the most vulnerable people.

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing violence against women and girls: information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-1]
- A2 – Understanding vulnerability and disability [A2: Discrimination & inclusion-1]
- A2 – Why address violence against women and girls [A2: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- A2 – What are the root causes of violence against women and girls? [A2: Gender & sexual violence-4]
- A2 – Exploring gender roles and power [A2: Gender & sexual violence-5]
- A2 – Men and women: listening to one another [A2: Gender & sexual violence-6]
- A2 – Self-discovery tool (Violence against women and girls) [A2: Gender & sexual violence-7]
- B – Loving the outcast [B: Discrimination & inclusion-2]
- B – Wonderfully made (FGM/C) (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-2]
- B – Men, women and God [B: Gender & sexual violence-5]
- B – Protecting those vulnerable to sexual violence (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-2]

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