

2 Samuel 14:1-33 | “How NOT to Make Things Right”
Preached on October 16, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to 2 Samuel 14 this morning. *[pause]*

How do you feel about conflict with another person?

There are some very unique people out there who don't mind going through conflict, but I'd say the majority of us don't like conflict.

In fact, many of us avoid conflict at all costs because it's not enjoyable.

It causes us to do something hard and unpleasant, and there's a risk of things escalating and getting worse. *[pause]*

We don't like that feeling of someone being angry at us, and who knows what they will say and do?

And so, I think I could confidently say that most (if not all) of us in this room do not like conflict. *[pauseeee]*

Here's another question though: how do you *handle* conflict?

That's actually a very different question than just asking how you feel about conflict.

Because if you think about it, you could be one of those weird people who doesn't mind going through conflict, but you could handle conflict horribly.

Or you could be someone who hates conflict, yet who still goes through it, and handles it correctly. *[pauseeee]*

When we get to our story for this morning, we see that David is most likely one of those people who doesn't like to handle conflict, at least when it comes to his sons.

But not only does he not like conflict with his sons, but he handles the conflict horribly.

And so this chapter is sort of a display of how NOT to make things right with someone else.

Let me show you what I mean, as we start **READING** in verse 1. *[READ VERSES 1-3]*

If you remember - Absalom, David's son is estranged and hanging out with his grandfather because he killed off his brother in revenge for raping his sister. *[pause]*

Joab knows that David has been thinking about Absalom, and he wants to get things moving in their relationship.

And what he determines to do is to sort of copy the Nathan incident¹ with a plan of his own by using a fake story to get David to condemn himself. *[pause]*

So Joab finds a wise woman from Tekoa, who is good at quick thinking and using her words well, and tells her what to say to David. *[pauseeee]*

Now the question that I don't believe we can be 100% sure about is, why does Joab want Absalom to return to Jerusalem?

Is this a politically-driven decision, where he wants to keep Absalom close, instead of letting him stir up things in exile?

Does he know that Absalom is possibly next in line, and he wants the kingly transition to go smoothly?

Or could he be just genuinely concerned for David and Absalom's relationship?

We aren't sure, but either way, this is Joab's plan - now let's see his plan in action in verse 4...*[READ 4-7]*

David hears the story of this woman pretending to be in need.

She explains that she is a widow and she has two sons, who fought in a field and the one killed the other.

Now the clan wants to get justice by killing the other son, but by killing the last remaining son, her and her husband's family line would be cut off forever.

So it's this very emotionally-driven story that is meant to appeal to David. *[pause]*

Here is this so-called widow, who just wants her family line to continue, but people are calling for her only remaining son's death.

What will be David's judgment? Verse 8...*[READ VERSES 8-11]*

You can tell this woman is a crafty, "wise woman" who is good at crafting what to say and how to say it.

She garners compassion from David and convinces him to even make the judgment, invoking the Lord's name, that no one can kill her son.

And really, that's her goal, for she is about to confront David with his own situation, for just listen to what she says next in verse 12...*[READ VERSES 12-17]*

Can you imagine saying that to the King? Now that's brave!

¹ See 2 Samuel 12:1-7.

David could have easily gotten mad and said, “Off with her head!”

Yet she says this, and connects her story with the Absalom situation. *[pauseeee]*

In her case, David ignored justice in the interest of her family’s welfare, well why doesn’t he do that with Absalom? *[pause]*

She talks about how we all die and we can’t be brought back, like Amnon is dead and nothing would bring him back.

But he could deal kindly with Absalom, for she claims that even God doesn’t take away life, but devises ways to restore people.

So if God finds ways to bring back banished ones, shouldn’t David? *[pause]*

By doing this, she was backing David into a corner and making him feel guilty for not acting like God does.

God brings people back, why shouldn’t he?

Also, he made a judgment that ignored justice in light of a family’s welfare, now she was calling him to act according to that precedent. *[pauseeee]*

So what should we think of this woman’s endeavors to tell David to bring back Absalom?

Well even though there are some similarities between her story and the Absalom situation, there were some major differences...

First, the story of her sons was not a premeditated, intentional killing, like Absalom’s.

Rather, it was a spur of the moment killing, in which they quarreled in a field together, and therefore could actually be constituted as manslaughter rather than murder.² *[pause]*

Also, the murder in her story had no witnesses, while Absalom’s killing was witnessed by many people.

According to the Law, no one could be put to death unless there were at least two witnesses.³ *[pause]*

Next, her remaining son was her last remaining heir, while Absalom was not David’s last remaining heir at all. *[pause]*

And in regards to how God works, yes, what she said was somewhat true, but it was a half-truth.

² See Numbers 35:15-24.

³ See Numbers 35:30.

Sometimes God *does* take away life, and yes, God *does* devise ways for banished ones to not remain outcasts, but only when they repent. *[pauseeee]*

After saying such bold remarks, she quickly returns back to her made up story to try to soften her remarks and get David to feel bad for her once again.

She claims that she was afraid of the people trying to kill her son and wanted to see if David would grant her request.

And she flatters him by saying how great his judgment is. *[pauseeee]*

OK, now that David has heard all of this, what will he do? Verse 18...*[READ VERSES 18-24]*

David shrewdly perceives that Joab is up to this, for why would some random widow say all of this to him out of her own volition? *[pause]*

The woman admits that Joab put her up to this in order to change things in the relationship of David and Absalom.

But surprisingly, David doesn't kill Joab, but calls for Absalom to return. *[pauseeee]*

It seems as though David felt like he was pushed into a corner and capitulated, for he really didn't want to bring Absalom back.

Why do I say that? Because he allows Absalom to return, but doesn't allow him to enter his presence. *[pauseeeeeee]*

After telling us all about this - the writer now turns to Absalom and what he does...

Verses 25-27 share some biographical information about him.

It tells us about his handsome appearance, his hair that he cut every year, which weighed 5 pounds, and his growing family.

Notably, there's nothing about having good character or loving God, but only about his appearance.

Yet we do see his character come out when he responds to not being able to see David, starting in verse 28...*[READ VERSES 28-33]*

Two years go by and still Absalom is not allowed into the king's presence.

But why is that such a big deal to Absalom?

Because by not being allowed to see David, Absalom's chances at being next in line for the throne were slim.

So Absalom wanting to see David is probably his way of trying to get back into the line of succession by getting in the good favor of the court and the people. *[pauseeee]*

To do this, Absalom tries to get Joab to come to him, but Joab wouldn't.

In response, Absalom decides to use some drastic measures to get his attention.

He sends his servants to burn his fields, which obviously does the trick, as anyone would come talk to the person who burns their fields. *[pause]*

In doing this, we see Absalom's character start to come out more and more, as he's very manipulative and aggressive. *[pause]*

Once he gets Joab's attention, he's like, "Hey, why am I even back, for I was better off back where I was in exile than being here and restricted."

And he gives David an ultimatum, either kill him if he's guilty, or let him back into his presence. *[pause]*

That was a risky move by Absalom, for he could be put to death...

...Yet it was a calculated move because by this time Absalom knew that his father wouldn't put him to death, since he hasn't already. *[pause]*

Finally, David feels forced to let Absalom back into his presence, and so Absalom comes and bows to the ground, and David kisses him.

The way that verse 33 is written is very terse and quick, I believe showing that this isn't a genuine, emotional reconciliation, but an empty, formal thing.

David didn't really want Absalom back, and in the next chapter, Absalom stirs the people up against David, so this wasn't real reconciliation. *[pauseeee]*

That's the story, but let's think through what it teaches.

It shows us David, who does everything he can do to NOT deal with the Absalom issue.

And so it shows us what it looks like when you don't want to deal with an issue. *[pause]*

First, when you don't want to deal with an issue...

A. You often won't do anything.

Sometimes in our homes, a maintenance issue arises and needs attention.

But it's not always fun to deal with, and you really don't want to deal with it, so you try to ignore it as long as possible. *[pause]*

I think sometimes we think, “If I ignore it long enough, maybe it will go away.” *[pause]*

Well this is a typical way that some of us deal with issues, we don’t do anything about them, and that’s what David seems to be doing at first.

He doesn’t want to face up to what has been done by his sons. *[pause]*

He first doesn’t do anything when Amnon raped Tamar, which led to Absalom killing Amnon, and now he doesn’t do anything with Absalom, which will lead to a rift in the kingdom.

In essence, there was no justice done because David didn’t want to step up and do anything. *[pause]*

He was a parent, yes, but he was also king and judge of the land, and so he needed to step up and do something when major crimes were committed. *[pause]*

By ignoring his sons’ sins, he was letting them think that their actions were acceptable.

Even Absalom acted like he was innocent, and knew that David wouldn’t do anything about his murder.

In fact, later on in 1 Kings 1, we are told of another of David’s sons, Adonijah, and it says, “His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, “Why have you done thus and so?”⁴ *[pauseeee]*

David didn’t want to deal with his sons’ issues.

He’s being very passive because in his mind it’s easier. *[pause]*

That’s the thing - dealing with an issue is often hard, and so we consider that if we just do nothing, it’s a lot easier.

Then I don’t have to go through the uncomfortable feeling of having to deal with the issue and making a hard decision. *[pause]*

Sometimes we think that the issue will just somehow resolve itself if I leave it alone.

But that is not how it works, for it only makes matters worse, as the tension and separation between David and Absalom grew.

And so this reminds us that if there’s an issue, you need to attend to it, not ignore it. *[pauseeee]*

This is what happens in parenting.

Disciplining your children is a lot harder and takes lots of effort to do it consistently, and so we think, “It would be so much easier just to ignore this.”

⁴ 1 Kings 1:6.

But the results over time are not good, just like the results of David not dealing with his sons' sins. *[pause]*

This also happens in marriages.

When a husband and wife get into a fight, it's easier to just ignore it and move on, but what happens?

By doing nothing, nothing is resolved.

This creates a wedge between them, and it only compacts the issues and grows bigger. *[pauseeee]*

This can happen in a friendship or work relationship, or really any issue that we face.

So in light of this text, evaluate how you are dealing with issues in your life.

Are you ignoring the problem? Are you doing nothing?

Maybe you need to go talk to that person that you have an issue with, and make it right.⁵

Maybe you need to confront someone in love about how they have sinned against you.⁶

Instead of doing nothing, and making matters worse, then choose to make it right today or very soon. *[pauseeeee]*

We see something else come out of this passage about what happens when you don't want to deal with an issue....

B. You become easily manipulated.

Let's say that there's a problem with your car, and you really don't want to deal with it.

Now imagine someone hears about your car issue, and they make this great, persuasive argument for dealing with it in a certain way. *[pause]*

Because you don't want to deal with the issue, you are easily manipulated and persuaded to go with that way of dealing with it because it sounds simpler.

Someone has laid out a way to deal with it, and you're thinking, "OK whatever, I just want it over with."

That's the sort of thing that can happen to any of us when we don't want to deal with something, and that's what happened with David.

He didn't want to deal with Absalom, so he was opened up to being easily manipulated to act a certain way. *[pause]*

⁵ See Matthew 5:23-26.

⁶ See Matthew 18:15-17.

Joab, using the woman of Tekoa, manipulated him to bring back Absalom.

And then Absalom manipulated Joab and then him by giving him an ultimatum. *[pause]*

You could tell that David was going against his conscience because people kept pushing him into a corner and then he would give in.

He knew that Absalom didn't deserve pardoned, for Absalom wasn't even repentant. *[pauseeee]*

You see, we become easily manipulated when we really want something, and so we are more prone to believe lies that sound good, too. *[pauseeee]*

David really wanted the issue to just go away, and so when people manipulated him, he gave in, for it seemed like the way to have peace and for the issue to disappear. *[pause]*

Instead of standing up for what he believed was right, he let people convince him with forceful tactics.

He treasured an easy route over what God wanted, and that's what we do when we don't deal with issues...

We are treasuring ease over what God wants. *[pause]*

God desires for people to reconcile, yet we want to go our own way, for it's easier in our minds.

And we will let people persuade and even manipulate us because we are looking for the easiest way out of the problem at hand. *[pauseeee]*

Is there an issue that you are facing, in which you are looking for the easiest way out of it as possible?

Instead of seeking the easy way out, seek the right way - God's way.

Ask Him for wisdom and look in His Word, pray - He will help you.

Don't let emotional appeals or forceful manipulations influence your decisions - those things can twist the truth - but let God's Word, *the truth*, direct what you do. *[pauseeee]*

Thirdly, when you don't want to deal with an issue...

C. You make half-hearted decisions.

Have you ever made a half-hearted decision?

Let's say you are given the option of having liver and onions or scrapple.

Both are disgusting in my opinion, and there may be some of you out there who like one or both of those things, but just imagine that you thought they were disgusting like the rest of humanity.

If you had to choose one, I'm guessing it would be a half-hearted decision.

You don't really want to do either, but you pick one, and you aren't fully into it.

That's what David did with his decision to bring Absalom back.

He half-heartedly brings him back because he doesn't really want to, but he feels compelled to.

This is why when he brings Absalom back, he tells him that he can't come into his presence.

[pause]

David wasn't fully on board with his decision, for I believe it went against his conscience.

He was struggling between justice and mercy, and he refused to go fully one way or the other, and so Absalom was left in this in-between stage. *[pause]*

On the one hand, David knew that Absalom deserved to die, and he didn't want to do that, for it was his son.

Yet on the other hand, he didn't want to fully pardon Absalom because Absalom didn't show any signs of repentance and he had committed a capital offense.⁷

So David went half-way, leading Absalom to get even more angry and frustrated, so that he manipulated his way back into the court. *[pause]*

As you can see, this half-heartedness by David only made things worse, for even though Absalom is finally allowed to come back, he then goes on to subvert David's kingdom.

[pauseeee]

Half-hearted reconciliation is not reconciliation.

You can say that you reconciled all you want, but you never truly reconciled. *[pause]*

That's what happened with David and Absalom.

It was reconciliation in public, but not in practice.

They may have appeared to make it right in the end, but they didn't.

Why? Because David never confronted Absalom about his sin, in fact, he caused Absalom to think that what he did was justified.

And as for Absalom's part, he never repented for what he did.

There was no forgiveness or justice, and without those things then reconciliation doesn't actually happen. *[pause]*

⁷ See Exodus 21:12 and similar passages.

You see, David's actions here in this chapter show us that...

When you don't deal with an issue correctly, the issue only gets worse!

When there is no reconciliation, then there's no resolution, but only division, or at the very least unresolved bitterness and tension. *[pause]*

Two people are reconciled when the sin committed is brought up and displayed for what it is, and then when that sin is repented of and forgiven.

That is the proper way that you need to be dealing with your issues with other people. *[pause]*

When you sin against someone, you ought to go to that person and confess that sin, apologizing for it.

And when someone sins against you, you ought to talk to that person about their sin and extend forgiveness.

So don't just wait around and think, "They should come to *me*," for the Bible says to go to that person. *[pauseeee]*

At different points in our lives, we will encounter issues with others, but don't sit back and do nothing, for the problem continues and grows.

Don't become easily manipulated by others about it, but let God's Word guide you.

Don't perform a half-hearted "reconciliation" with the other person, for it's not really reconciliation, and the problem is still there.

Make things right God's way.

It's not always the easiest way, but it's the best way and you will be thankful for it in the end. *[pause]*

Who do you need to make things right with? Make it right today. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to think about this: what's the difference between this story and the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15?⁸

The prodigal son came to his senses and realized what he had done, and then went to his father.

Absalom never did that.

He never recognized his sin and repented.

⁸ See Luke 15:11-32.

That's what God is looking for, as evidenced by David's repentance and then forgiveness by God.

So if you have never repented of your sins against God and trusted in Jesus Christ's sacrifice on your behalf, then do that today - that's the most important thing you can do. *[pauseeee]*

You see, in this story there is no true justice or mercy, but there is a place where justice and mercy meet.

It's at the Cross where God put forth Jesus Christ to die for our sins, thus paying the penalty for our sins, and through it, extending forgiveness and mercy to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him. *[pause]*

While David wasn't willing to sacrifice his son for justice, God was willing.

And while the woman of Tekoa said many wrong things and half-truths, she was right about one thing: truly God "devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast."...

For He has made a way for us, who were separated from Him because of our sin, to be reconciled back to Him with *true* reconciliation. *[pause]*

He didn't sit back and do nothing.

He didn't do it half-heartedly, but out of love and a full commitment to reconciliation, He gave His only Son for us.

May we reflect His forgiveness and reconciliation in our relationships - that's how TO make things right.