



## Close to Home Study Guide

### Dealing with Acquaintance Rape

#### 1. Opening (2 minute)\*

Acknowledge that this is a difficult subject and may stir up uncomfortable memories and emotions, especially for those who have experienced sexual violation or know someone who has. Mention that it's okay to leave the room if necessary. If possible, have someone prepared to accompany those who need to walk out.

Read Psalm 142 together, which expresses some of the desolation and entrapment one can feel in situations like this, as well as our hope in God's help and care.

#### 2. Story-telling (7 minutes)

Summarize Natasha's story. What happened? How did she respond? What do you think Justin did after the incident? Why didn't she tell her parents? How did Mrs. T respond?

#### 3. Review of pamphlet (8 minutes)

- Look at "What is acquaintance rape?" on page 4 and summarize the definitions of sexual assault and the ways survivors often respond. Discuss why victims often feel the assault was their fault.
- Ask everyone to read the "Myths and realities about sexual assault" on page 5. Which myths do they hear most often and why? Which reality surprises or troubles them the most? What questions arise out of these myths and realities?
- Discuss the reality that "the vast majority of sexual assaults are committed by men against women." Why is this true? What factors contribute to this reality?

#### 4. Reading of Scripture text (15 minutes)

Ask someone to read 2 Samuel 13:1-21 or the story as told on pages 6-7.

- Invite the group to focus especially on the power dynamics in this situation. What kind of power did each person have and how did they use it?
- Discuss what Amnon, Jonadab and David could have done differently in order to prevent this assault. Could Tamar have done anything differently?

Point to the third paragraph on page 6 and the fact that Amnon did not act out of love but out of selfishness and forceful power. Discuss the list of attitudes which express true love. How does our society encourage or discourage these attitudes? How does it encourage or discourage domination and selfishness?

- Highlight the section on page 7: "God hears the voice of the victim." Note that God expected the people of Israel to care for those who are vulnerable because they had experienced slavery and knew what it meant to be victimized. See especially Deuteronomy 24:12-22. God also insisted on justice for all, as noted in Psalm 82:3, Isaiah 1:17 and Jeremiah 22:3.
- What could David and Absalom have done to respond to Tamar's cries for justice? What would justice have looked like for Tamar?

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\*The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

- What can men—and women—do now to prevent or respond to rape? See *Stopping Rape: What Men Can Do* at [www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org) for suggestions such as supporting survivors and speaking up when people make jokes or use degrading language about others.

It's important to acknowledge that God doesn't always deliver people from violence or oppression. We may in fact wonder where God is or why God allows these things to happen. Discuss:

- Who is responsible for evil?
- How does God show love and concern when bad things happen to us?
- How does God work for good in all things? (Note the alternate translation of Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good . . ." NIV/TNIV footnote).

### 5. Steps toward healing (12 minutes)

- Look at the "Steps toward healing" on pages 8-9. Which one might be the most difficult? How can the congregation be most helpful to someone who's been violated in this way? Who in the congregation is prepared to walk alongside someone through these steps? What additional support and training might be needed?
- One step not mentioned here is to get medical attention. This is important in order to determine the risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy. For more information about immediate steps to take, go to <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-recovery/tips-for-after-an-attack>.
- Also look at Step 3. If the survivor wants to take legal action, it is important to get a rape kit exam as soon as possible, so that evidence can be preserved.
- Point out the side-bar on page 8. If possible, bring along the current definition of sexual assault from your province or state.
- If appropriate, ask survivors if they would like a service of healing, as suggested in Step 6. What would be most helpful? Who should be included in planning this?
- Bring information about local counselors and support groups which can assist in healing from sexual assault.
- Encourage your church library to purchase the books listed on pages 10-11.
- Pray together for all those who've experienced sexual violence, that they would find healing and restoration. Pray also for those who commit these crimes, that they would change their ways and seek forgiveness and healing.

### 6. Closing (1 minute)

*Loving God, we know you hear our cries. You know our pain and distress. Help us to also hear the cries of those around us and give them support and justice. Give us all strength, persistence, healing and hope. Keep drawing us to the wholeness and life that is your will. Amen.*



This study guide is written by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director for Women's Advocacy in the Peace and Justice Ministries section of Mennonite Central Committee US. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from the Mennonite Publishing Network of the Mennonite Church (see [www.mpn.net/closetohome](http://www.mpn.net/closetohome)) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions ([www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome](http://www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome)).