

## But Amnon Had A Friend

Michael Plant was one of the world's best yachtsmen. Numerous times he navigated the oceans, gaining skill and notoriety. Then early in the fall of 1992, he decided to go all the way and set out from the East Coast on a solo voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to France.

He purchased a state-of-the-art sailboat with the best navigational equipment money could buy, christening it "The Coyote." With one press of a button, its emergency global positioning locator could transmit a signal to a satellite, relaying it within seconds to either of two ground locations that could pinpoint his exact coordinates, even in the middle of the vast ocean. The Coyote was the most fail-safe vessel of its kind.

But on the fourth day of his voyage, ground locators lost contact with the Coyote. Weather scans of the Atlantic showed storms causing high seas, and it was assumed that Plant was navigating the storms and would soon regain contact. But he never did. Search-and-rescue squads were deployed to the last known location of the Coyote but to no avail. Commercial airliners were asked to monitor their emergency channels in case Plant was broadcasting signals for help.

Two weeks after his departure, a ship about 400 miles off the Azores came upon the Coyote floating upside down. If there's one position where a state-of-the-art global positioning locator will not be of much use, it's upside down. Hoisting the Coyote up for a closer look, the rescuers searched the cabin, hoping to find the emergency life raft already deployed, which would indicate that Michael Plant might still be alive and floating somewhere in the Atlantic. But they found the life raft only partially inflated, still stuck in the hull of the boat. To this day, the body of Michael Plant has never been found.

The telltale culprit in the accident was a broken keel. No one knows whether the Coyote hit some ocean sewage, a submarine or a whale, but the ballast had been broken off, leaving the boat without any weight in the keel. The ballast was an 8,000-pound weight, making this sailboat one of the safest vessels on the ocean. Even should it capsize, the design of the ballast would roll it upright again. Yet without the weight in the keel, the Coyote was no match for the storms of the Atlantic.

For a boat to have stability in a storm, there must be more weight beneath the waterline than above it. Without ballast, a boat can look fine in the calm water of the port. But without any weight in its keel, the boat is unable to launch any further into the deep. Character is the weight beneath the waterline of life!

- **2 Samuel 13:1-3 (KJV)** 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. 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 any thing to her. **But Amnon had a friend**, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.
- Amnon was the firstborn son of King David, the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. He lived in the palace and had everything anyone could ever need. He had the reputation of a royal, and with his family was admired by the masses. His bright future was assured by his imperial lineage. But behind the image Amnon was a fraud!
- Amnon had a deep dark secret that he was unsuccessfully trying to deal with. He was consumed with lust for his own half-sister Tamar. He couldn't court her because such a relationship was forbidden by God's law, but he had entertained the notion secretly until it occupied his thoughts day and night.
- It is one of the sad contradictions of our fallen human nature that ever since the Garden of Eden, we tend to desire forbidden fruit. In fact, it often seems that the more strongly something is forbidden, the more greedily we desire it.
- Amnon didn't realize that he was already ensnared in the dreaded cycle of sin. One preacher called it "LSD" – lust, sin, death.
- **James 1:14-15 (KJV)** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own **lust**, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth **sin**: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth **death**.
- Amnon thought that just because everything still appeared right on the outside, he was doing okay. His name meant "faithful" but he was only being faithful outwardly where everyone could see it. Inwardly, he was in reality being unfaithful to his father, to his family, to himself and to his God. He wasn't guilty of sin because he had struggles (everyone has struggles!), but because he wasn't being honest about his struggles before God. There is probably nothing more ridiculous in human nature than our attempts to "hide" from the God who can read our every thought!
- Technically, Amnon had not yet fallen into sin, but he was hanging above the pit of disaster by a very slender thread. All that was holding him back was his "royal reputation" – he knew that he could not risk publicly what he thought about privately.

- By himself, perhaps Amnon would have never acted out his lustful fantasies. Perhaps his desire not to soil his reputation, his knowledge that his desire was wrong before God, and the warning voice of his conscience would have been enough to hold him back for a few years until Tamar was married and beyond his reach.
- BUT AMNON HAD A FRIEND!
- Jonadab was the nephew of King David; that is, he hung around with the royal family, but he was not in line for the throne. The Bible says that he was a very subtle or conniving man. His name meant “Jehovah gives” and he made a mockery out of its meaning by convincing his friend Amnon that God would allow him to sin and get by, that God would “give” him his desire even though it was wrong.
- Under the influence of Jonadab, Amnon carried out a wicked plan to rape his own half-sister. He shamed her, he shamed himself, he shamed his father, and he shamed his whole family. Through his selfishness, he scarred Tamar for the rest of her life. He also unwittingly destroyed himself, because Tamar’s brother Absalom would eventually seek revenge and kill him.
- By himself, perhaps Amnon could have held out a little longer against temptation. BUT AMNON HAD A FRIEND!
- The name Tamar meant “palm tree.” Palm trees have long tap roots that go deep underground to hidden sources of water; that’s why they survive even in desert conditions. In Scripture, palm trees represent victory (that’s why people waved palm branches at Jesus’ triumphal entry and why the redeemed will do it in eternity according to the book of Revelation).
- By listening to the advice of a conniving friend, by following the counsel of someone who was familiar with the palace but not part of the royal family, Amnon utterly destroyed his “VICTORY.”
- Meanwhile, the crafty Jonadab walked away unscathed by the whole sordid situation. The Bible records that he is still lurking about the palace when Amnon is killed by Absalom; in fact, it is Jonadab that brings the news of his death to King David! What a “friend” he was!
- **1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)** Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."
- In chemistry, a catalyst is a substance that assists a chemical reaction without taking part in it. For example ...
  - Try to set a sugar cube on fire. It will bubble and melt, but as soon as you remove the match any flame generated will go out. However, rub a small amount of ash on the cube and it will catch fire and burn steadily. It is not the ash that is burning; it is acting as a catalyst while remaining unchanged itself.
  - Leave a bottle of pop open and it will eventually go flat as the carbon dioxide is released. However, add some sugar and the reaction will accelerate to the point where a fountain of bubbles will flow out of the bottle; instead of taking days, it takes minutes.
  - Hydrogen peroxide will gradually decompose into oxygen and water if it is exposed to warmth or light. But sterilize a wound with hydrogen peroxide and the iron in your blood will act as a catalyst to cause the release of oxygen through violent bubbling.
  - Even your car is an example; its exhaust passes through a catalytic converter which changes certain chemicals in the exhaust even though the converter remains the same.
- Talk to anyone who has fallen into destructive lifestyles and sinful habits, and 99 times out of 100, you’ll find a “friend” in the shadows! It’s hard to put a finger on the exact details of their influence, but it’s easy for the spiritually discerning to detect the “catalyst” at work!
  - When did you first start doing drugs? I had a friend ...
  - When did you take your first drink? I had a friend ...
  - When did you start smoking? I had a friend ...
  - When did you first look at pornography? I had a friend ...
  - When did you begin cheating on your spouse? I had a friend ...
  - When did you first start criticizing the church? I had a friend ...
  - When did you stop listening to your pastor? I had a friend ...
  - When did you drop your holiness convictions? I had a friend ...
  - When did you first slack off in your prayer life? I had a friend ...
  - When did church become more ritual than reality? I had a friend ...
- SHOW ME YOUR FRIENDS AND I’LL SHOW YOU YOUR FUTURE!
- **Amos 3:3 (KJV)** Can two walk together, except they be agreed?
- **Proverbs 13:20 (MSG)** Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces.
- **James 4:4 (NIV)** You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.
- **It’s time to get some spiritual ballast below the waterline!**