

## **Tamar – A Study of Triumph**

Widows of the Old Testament  
Teacher/Facilitator Study Guide  
Sylvia De Jong

I would be very interested in hearing your feedback when you have used these materials for a Bible study group. I am looking for constructive criticism in ways to improve the materials for effective use. Please let me know what works, what doesn't work and how God uses the study to change or bless people's lives. [Sylvia@dejongministries.com](mailto:Sylvia@dejongministries.com)

Following are the intent and answers to the questions. The questions are formed to draw the student's mind to better understand the topic and God's overall sovereignty.

Please ask the students to read *Tamar - A Study of Triumph* in the *Widows of the Old Testament* book before answering the questions. If possible, it would be good to give each of them the book and study guide a week prior to when the class begins. The study will be most effective if the participant prepares ahead of time.

*Italics* indicate the text in the Student's Study Guide.

\*Indicates the author's study helps for the teacher/facilitator.

### **Tamar – A Study of Triumph**

*There are eight Hebrew words for "triumph" – all used with reference to God in praise and prayer and also in discussion concerning Him (Strong's Concordance). God triumphs in our lives. The triumph in the study of Tamar is the triumph God brought about by using the life of Tamar. He enabled her to become an ancestress of King David and of Jesus Christ in spite of her failure to trust God and her deceptive scheme. God be praised, for there is hope! God will help us to overcome our failures if we seek Him and His intervention in our lives.*

1. *In this study, we learn about God and the beginnings of life. Paul describes God's sovereignty or rule over all in Acts 17:24-28. What are the five actions of God described here?*

- a) God made the world and everything in it.
- b) He has given all men life and breath and everything else.
- c) From one man he made every nation of men.
- d) He determined the times set for them.
- e) He determined where they should live.

2. *Why did God do these things (v. 27)?*

So that men would seek Him and reach out to find Him. He is not far from each one of us. In Him we live and move and have our being.

3. *How can we know who God is today and what He expects from us (See Psalm 119:105-108)? Read God's Word and study it.*

**Discuss:** *How did the people in the book of Genesis know about God?*

\*God spoke directly to Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). This knowledge and history was passed down in families orally. Tamar did not have a Bible to read but we do and are without excuse.

\*Define read and study.

Read – To understand words and derive meaning from them.

Study – Careful examination or investigation to more fully understand what is written or shown.

4. *Read Ezekiel 28:11-17; Isaiah 14:12-15 and Revelation 12:5-9. Why was Lucifer (created by God as an angel) cast out of heaven with one third of the angels?*

He used his free will to desire or covet God's position and power. One third of the angels became his followers. God cast them out of heaven.

\*Keep discussion focused on Lucifer and the angels who followed him and why God cast them out. This is not the time for a thorough study of these verses.

5. *Adam and Eve were led astray by Satan (Lucifer) and disobeyed God's commands to them. God gave Satan a promise concerning the curse of sin brought on mankind. What was the promise and who fulfilled it (Genesis 3:15)?*

God promised Satan that a woman would bear a Son who would crush him, but he (Satan) would strike Him first. Jesus, God's Son, born of the virgin Mary, fulfilled the promise when He died on the cross and rose from the grave.

6. *Who was the father of the great nation from which Jesus Christ (Messiah) would come (Genesis 12:1-4)?*

Abraham. That great nation is the nation of Israel.

7. *In what way is Genesis 12:1-4 significant to us today? Answers will vary.*

a) If I bless the nation of Israel, God will bless me.

b) If I curse the nation of Israel, I will be cursed.

c) I have been blessed through my Savior, Jesus Christ, a Jew.

d) I am blessed through the Scriptures, written and preserved by Jewish scholars. The physician Luke was the only Gentile writer.

\*Belief about the nation Israel is controversial today. Talk about what this verse says but avoid getting into a discussion of dispensational or replacement theology at this time. It would draw you away from the topic of Old Testament history surrounding Judah and Tamar.

8. *How was Judah related to Abraham (pg. 16)?*

Judah was Abraham's great-grandson.

9. *What relationship did/does God intend to be the most beautiful fulfilling relationship between humans on earth (pg. 16)?*

The marriage relationship between a man and his wife.

\*Share with students how it is often used as an illustration in the Bible for God's desired relationship with Israel (Isaiah 54:5) and Christ's desired relationship with His Church (Ephesians 5:31-33; Revelation 19:6-8). It is a relationship of trusting love between the bridegroom and His bride.

10. *Judah's and Tamar's story is not often shared. Why do you think that is?*

It is difficult to discuss sexual matters in a mixed group.

*Why is it important for the churches today to discuss sexual issues?*

To discuss sex is important because moral values and abstinence until marriage help prevent HIV/AIDS, or other sexually transmitted diseases.

\*God forbids sexually intimate relationships outside of marriage. When adults and teens disregard God's law of marriage, they open themselves to sexually transmitted diseases and abortion issues.

11. *What does God offer to people who have lost spouses through death or broken marriage vows, to people who have been morally impure, or to people with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases?*

Answers will vary.

\*God cares about each person and offers hope (Romans 15:13) through His loving care, compassion, forgiveness and peace, for each one who comes to a personal relationship with God and believes in His Son Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

### **Read Genesis 38:1-7**

12. *Who were Judah's three sons, born to Shua's daughter?*

Er, Onan and Shelah.

13. *How did Judah and his nine brothers deceive their father Jacob (Genesis 37:23-31)?*

They took their brother Joseph and put him in a well to die. Judah saved Joseph's life by persuading them to sell him as a slave to a caravan going to Egypt. They deceived Jacob by telling him wild animals had killed Joseph.

**Discuss:** *Do you suppose Judah thought of Joseph later and wondered what happened to him?*

\*Encourage the students to read the rest of Genesis on their own.

14. *Of what descent was Tamar (pg. 17)?*

Canaanite, quite possibly Philistine.

**Map:** Show a Bible map. Adullam and Timnath are located between Jerusalem and Gaza.

15. *What caused Er's death (Genesis 38:7)?*

He was so wicked the Lord put him to death.

16. *Was there another time mankind became so evil it grieved God enough to destroy them (Genesis 6:5-8)?* Yes.

*What did God do (Genesis 6:17-22; 7:6-12, 23)?*

He sent a flood to destroy the wicked people. Noah and his family were obedient to God, built an ark, and being in the ark, along with pairs of all the animals and birds, escaped death. Every living creature on earth perished.

17. *What is the Levirate Marriage Law (pg.19)? Read Deuteronomy 25:5-6.*

The brother of a deceased husband was to marry the widow and conceive a child that would be raised up in the deceased brother's name to receive the firstborn's birthright and inheritance.

**Read Genesis 38:8-23.**

18. *Why did God take Onan's life (vv. 9-10)?*

Onan married Tamar but refused to produce a child for his brother. He did not want a child that would have his brother's birthright and inheritance.

19. *What did Judah promise Tamar when he sent her to live as a widow in her father's house (v. 11)?*

He implied that she would be given to Shelah as a wife when he became a man.

20. *What were Judah's reasons for grieving?*

a) His son Er's death. b) His son Onan's death. c) His wife's death.

21. *Tamar was also in grief for many reasons. What were they?*

She lost her husbands Er and Onan. Judah did not keep his promise when Shelah grew up. She was childless and had no child to provide for her after inheritance.

22. *What were the two things Judah did following his time of grieving (vv. 12-16)?*

a) He went to shear his sheep. b) He visited a prostitute on the way.

**Map:** Show location of Timnah. Enaim means fountain and doesn't seem to be a town.

23. *Tamar made a plan to deceive Judah. What was it and how do you feel about it (vv. 17-19)?*

She took off her widow clothes, dressed as a prostitute with heavy veils and sat by the road Judah traveled on.

**Discuss:** *Is it ever right to be deceptive? Why or why not? You may use Scripture.*

\*Tamar knew Levirate marriage law (Hittite law codes in her culture) but had no Bible. Consider Romans 1:20. The source of lies is the devil (John 8:44; Acts 5:3). Allow students to share verses in the Bible about lying.

24. *What did Judah give Tamar— who was disguised— as a pledge for payment (vv. 17-19)?*

He gave his seal (signet) with its cord and his staff.

\*The KJV says bracelets. Hebrew word *pathiyl* “*paw-theel*” can be translated lines also. Some think the signet was worn around his neck on a line or cord.

25. *What happened when Judah sent the goat payment (vv. 20-23)?*

No prostitute was found. Judah must have felt uneasy, wondering if his seal, cord and staff would ever show up, and if so, where.

26. *What did Judah do, three months later, when he heard that Tamar was guilty of prostitution and was pregnant (v. 24)?*

He ordered for Tamar to be burned to death.

27. *What was Tamar’s response (v. 25)?*

She sent a messenger ahead of her to Judah with the seal, its cord, and the staff, saying the owner was the father of her unborn child.

28. *How did Judah respond when he recognized his seal, cord and staff?*

He said “She is more righteous than I, since I would not give her to my son Shelah.”

29. *Judah apparently forgave Tamar, allowing her to live. What was the result of her pregnancy (v. 27)?*

She gave birth to twin boys, Perez and Zerah.

30. *Describe their birth (vv. 28-30).*

A hand and wrist presented. A scarlet thread was tied on the wrist. When it was pulled back, Perez came out first, then Zerah followed, with the red thread on his wrist.

31. *What is the meaning of the name Perez? Breaking out.  
Of Zerah? Scarlet.*

32. *Joseph's genealogy of Jesus is in Matthew 1:1-16. Copy vv. 3 and 16 here.*

(v. 3) Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram.

(v. 16) And Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

\*This genealogy is of the royal line of David through Solomon. It speaks of Messiah born into a royal family.

*Perez is also in the genealogy of Mary and Jesus in Luke (Luke 3:33).*

\*This is Jesus' lineage of Mary through Nathan, son of David . . . from Adam, son of God. Jesus is son of Adam, who is son of God; it speaks of Jesus' humanity and by virgin birth, His deity!

**Discuss:** *The way Tamar chose to take care of her situation, gave her sons but no husband. Could God have given Tamar a husband and children another way and still allowed her to be an ancestress in the lineage of Messiah?*

\*Could she have appealed to Judah and asked for him to fulfill his promise about Shelah? Could she have prayed and trusted God to provide a solution that honored Him?

### **Fill in the blanks**

33. *Christ left heaven's glory to be born into an imperfect human family. Philippians 2:5-11 tells us Christ humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross. "God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."*

### **Personal Application**

*Give thought to these questions and answer them from your heart.*

34. *What must it have been like for Tamar to live with a wicked husband – so wicked that God slew him? It must have been extremely painful emotionally and physically if he was abusive to her.*

**Discuss:** What are healthy ways to deal with painful family situations?

\*Prayer. Pastoral or professional counsel. Support from family members and / or church family.

35. *Is there any way you identify with Tamar’s widowhood or her longing for a child?*

\*The answers to the above question may bring awareness of hurting people in your group. Ask God to give you special opportunities to pray for and minister to them.

36. *In God’s amazing grace and forgiveness he chose Tamar to be an ancestress of His Son Jesus Christ. God was able to bring triumph out of the tragedy of deceit (pg. 25).*

**Discuss:** *Tamar felt justified in deceiving Judah to get what she wanted.*

*a) Does it honor God to deceive people to get what one wants?*

*b) Earlier we discussed ways Tamar could have addressed her plight of betrayal and rejection without yielding to deception. How should we respond, as followers of Christ, if someone treats us unjustly?*

\*Prayer. “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).

Appeal. “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15-17).

Seek counsel (1 Kings 22:5b; Proverbs 16:22).

37. *Do you trust God and wait on Him to grant you the desire of your heart?*

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\*Individual desires are different. Often desires are fulfilled in ways that do not honor God. Each one should be encouraged to bring these desires to the Lord and seek His will for them to be fulfilled. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

38. *God's hand is on your life. He wants you to believe and trust Him in all matters of your life. He wants you to be aware of your wrongdoings and repent so His grace and mercy can rule in your life (pg. 25). Repentance means a change of mind and heart which results in a changed life. Grace is undeserved favor. Mercy is compassion or withholding punishment.*

\*Invite individuals in the group to repent of their wrongdoings. God in His grace restores those who come to him with honest confession of failures to obey and please Him and a desire to change. 1 John 1:7b, 9. Some may prefer to do this alone. Some may want to seek your counsel and help. Help them feel comfortable either way. If anyone wants to receive Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, invite them to stay behind and talk with you or to call you this week.

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 15:16).*

Encourage the participants to do the following exercise at home after class.

**Exercise:** *Consider how God wants you to trust Him more. Ask God to show you something for which He wants you to trust Him. Record it here and watch to see how He helps you grow in trust in the weeks ahead. Note that God wants to triumph in your life!*

*I am going to trust God for \_\_\_\_\_ . Pray a prayer in simple words and ask God to help you trust Him for this.*

**Prayer:** Close with the written prayer (pg. 26) or your own

Included on page 10 are Simple Steps to Introduce Someone to Christ.

## Simple Steps to Introduce Someone to Christ

- 1) Pray for God's Spirit to draw unbelievers to recognize their need for Jesus Christ.
- 2) Remember you cannot save anyone. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares an individual's heart to desire salvation.
- 3) Give the opportunity but never pressure a person to receive Christ.
- 4) There are many verses that could be used. The following ones are easy to recall:
  - Show a person who is seeking salvation the "ABC's of Accepting Christ."
    - a) All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).
    - b) Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31a).
    - c) Confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Romans 10:9-10).
- 5) If the person has read these Scriptures and is desirous to pray to receive Christ, explain that it is a transaction that takes place between the individual and Jesus Christ by prayer – talking to the Lord.
- 6) An individual who needs help praying may wish to repeat a prayer after you. If there is no complete agreement, the person should be cautioned not to pray the words after you. "Lord Jesus, (pause) I believe you are the Son of God, (pause) that you died for my sins and rose again. (pause) I confess that I need You in my life. (pause) Be my Lord and to help me do what is right. (pause) I put my trust in You for salvation and for eternal life. (pause) Thank you for your forgiveness. (pause) I pray in your name. Amen.
- 7) Pray audibly using the person's name and thanking God for bringing her or him into the family of God. Pray for the individual to grow spiritually and ask God to help her or him to tell someone else about receiving Christ as Savior.
- 8) Follow up is very important. If the person who receives Christ continues to come to the Bible study it will help growth to take place. Encourage each new believer to attend a good Bible teaching church, read God's Word daily, learn to pray, and share with others about their relationship with Christ.
- 9) Be diligent in prayer for new believers.