

Session 1 - Tamar



Intro

Welcome to the first week of this Restored group!

Today we are looking at a woman called Tamar. She is mentioned at the beginning of Jesus' family tree – which you can find at the beginning of your booklet. Over the next few weeks we will be looking at the other women mentioned in that family tree as well.

We will be thinking about how these are real women with real stories and how God restored and used those complex stories in his ultimate plan and how he can restore us as well. We will use craft to reflect this and help us on our journey over the next few weeks.

Part 1

Today we are going to look at the life of Tamar. She appears in chapter 38 of Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

Tamar was the daughter-in-law to Judah. *(Has anyone heard of Joseph and his technicolour dream coat? Well, that is loosely based on the story of Joseph in the Bible).* Judah was one of the older brothers of Joseph. His brothers were jealous of him, and they agreed to sell him into slavery. Judah was the one who had the idea of selling Joseph to slavery, so right away we can see that Judah is a complicated character.

Tamar was married to Judah's first son, Er. However, Er was wicked in the Lord's sight and he killed him. It's hard to imagine how wicked he could have been for God to kill him. We can only imagine what it would have been like for Tamar to have been married to this man.

Discussion Questions

- ▶ **Have you ever heard any of the stories of women in the Bible?**
- ▶ **What do you think of Tamar so far?**
- ▶ **Has anyone ever been treated badly by someone else? Relationship? Friendship? Marriage?**

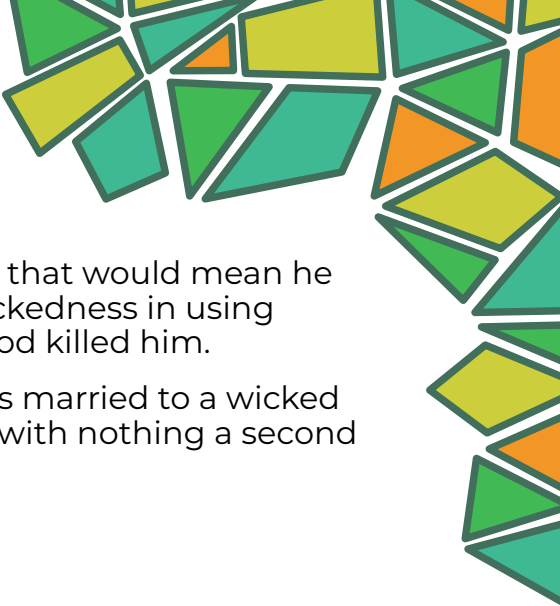
Craft Time

Part 2

So, we meet Tamar at this part of the story, she is a widow and has no child to take on the inheritance of her husband, so she has nothing to her name.

At the time when Tamar lived, the family line and inheritance belonged to the men of the family, so that meant that widows without sons were often left with nothing. To stop this, there was a law that meant if any woman was left widowed and without sons, then the closest male relative to the dead husband would take on that role of providing an heir. So, Onan, Judah's second son married Tamar.





But Onan didn't want to carry on his brothers' line as that would mean he wouldn't get as much inheritance. Because of his wickedness in using Tamar for his own needs and not looking after her, God killed him.

So here we have a woman who is widowed twice, was married to a wicked man and then used by his brother and has been left with nothing a second time around.

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What do you think life was like for Tamar in all of this?
- ◆ How would she have felt?
- ▼ Have you ever related to what Tamar is feeling?

Craft Time

Part 3

Because of this law that was there at the time, Tamar was to marry Judah's youngest son Shelah. But Judah said he was too young, so Tamar went home to her family and waited for when he was old enough. However, a long time passed, and it became clear that Judah had no intention of letting Shelah marry Tamar. So now she had no security, and it seems like she was abandoned with little to no hope of getting herself out of the situation.

Tamar had patiently waited but when nothing happened, she decided to take matters into her own hands. In those times, she would have needed an heir to protect her, so she creates a plan. When Judah was travelling to go somewhere, she dressed up and disguised herself as a prostitute. He didn't know it was her and he chose to sleep with her. Before he left, he said he would send her payment later, but she wanted assurance that he would come back and pay her, so he gave her his seal and staff (this is like giving someone your ID). These things would definitely identify that they were his. So, Tamar left and went back to her normal life. Judah sent his payment to the place where he had met the prostitute, but they said there were no prostitutes in that place.

This is what happens next:

²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant."

Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"

Genesis 38: 24



Discussion Questions

- ▶ What do you think of Tamar's actions?
- ▶ From what we have heard in the story, do you think Judah can ever change?
- ▶ Do you think this is the end of her story?

Craft Time

Part 4

As Tamar was being brought out, she said that she was pregnant by the man that owned the seal and staff, Judah's ID.

"²⁶Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah." And he did not sleep with her again."

Genesis 38:26

Tamar now had twin boys and, because of their culture, this meant her future was secure.

Tamar's life and family were very broken. Some parts of her life are very shocking to us. The evil in her husbands, the way she was treated and also her choice of actions as well.

Discussion Questions

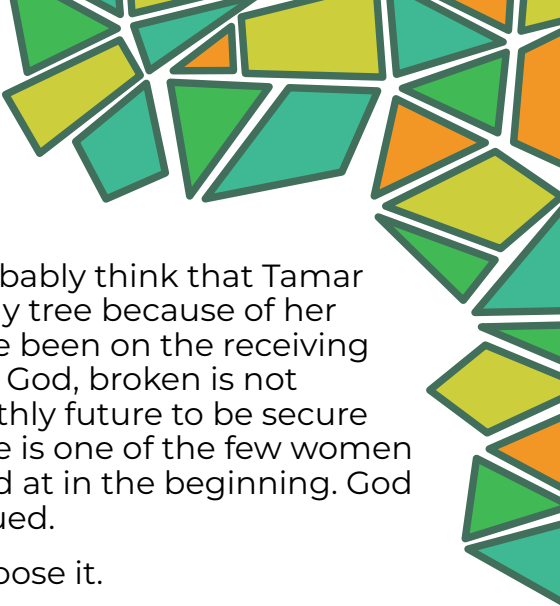
- ▶ How do you think Tamar affected Judah?
- ▶ Have you ever seen someone change?
- ▶ What does security look like in your life?

Summary

Tamar is labelled as one of the women in Jesus' family. It isn't what you expect.

We also see that despite her brokenness, her messed up life, God doesn't view her as worthless, like those around her did.

The next time we hear of Judah he actually is a completely different character, and we see him offer up his life as a sacrifice for his brother whereas, previously, he had sold his brother into slavery. We see a change in him, and it seems to be after Tamar's story when he changed.



Because we live in a judgemental world, you would probably think that Tamar wouldn't have been the first choice to be in Jesus' family tree because of her background. I imagine that all of us at some stage, have been on the receiving end of someone's judgements of us. But we see that to God, broken is not worthless. So, we see that God not only allowed her earthly future to be secure but also how much worth is placed on her life when she is one of the few women mentioned in the passage (Jesus' family tree) we looked at in the beginning. God restored Tamar's life to one that was honoured and valued.

We see that in God, there is an eternal security if we choose it.

Craft Time

Link to the craft:

If mosaics, plates are broken and we have restored them into something even more beautiful than they were before because broken does not mean worthless. Just like God did in Tamar's life.

