



#### 4- Heal a Family/Build a Nation

10/04/2009 - Jim Johnson – Gen 38:1-30

Though most of Genesis 37-50 centers upon Joseph, the Lord inserted a story about his brother Reuben in cp. 38. It serves as a case study of the fractured family values at work in the homes of Judah and his son and grandsons. It is a stark reminder that unless the Lord should intervene, the people of God would continue to hopelessly degenerate.

**Review of Verses 1-5:** Judah was unloved at home, so he sought out substitutes in his friendships and with a woman. He saw a woman he liked and took her and had relations with her. He completely rejected the ways of his father Jacob. That's just what a kid does when he feels rejected by dad. The woman eventually bore him three sons Er, Onan and Shelah.

**Fractured Family Value #1: \_\_\_\_\_ what you want.**

Judah was bizarrely self-centered. He said to himself, "I want sex and I want it now and I don't care who it's with, and I don't care if she is willing - as long as she looks good and gives me a satisfying experience."

**Review of Verses 6-10:** Judah chose Tamar as a wife for his first born Er. The boy was so innately evil that the Lord took his life. He was the last in a chain of generational degeneration. From Abraham to Er, each generation seemed to be more spiritually degraded than the generation before it. Tamar was made a widow. The culture in those days made it the duty of the second son, Onan, to take her as his wife, and give her a son on behalf of his deceased brother. This would eventually mean less family wealth for Onan, so he chose to enjoy the benefits of the marriage act without completing it so that there was conception. He was fantastically self-centered for which the Lord struck him down.

**Fractured Family Value #2: My \_\_\_\_\_ is only to me.**

Onan said to himself, "My duty is only to me – no one else. I'll just take what I want for me - but don't expect me to help you."

**Review of Verse 11:** It became the duty of the third and last son of Judah to raise up a family for Er. Judah told Tamar to wait until the boy (Shelah) had grown and come of age. However, he feared that his third son would die as well and therefore intended to withhold him from her.

**Fractured Family Value #3: Someone else is always at \_\_\_\_\_.**

Judah believed it was Tamar's fault that his sons died. And yet it was Judah who sired the evil boys that merited God's judgment. Judah, however held to the idea that he was always right and others were always wrong.

**Fractured Family Value #4: It's OK to \_\_\_\_\_ when it's to family.**

Judah led Tamar to believe that Shelah would be given to her when he came of age. He had no intention of allowing that to happen. In his mind, she was family, and it's OK to lie to family.

**Review of Verses 12-19:** Shelah reached adulthood and Tamar began to suspect that Judah had lied & had no intention of fulfilling his promise to her. She disguised herself as a prostitute and positioned herself so that when Judah came along, he would proposition her. He promised a baby goat for payment, but gave her his staff, seal and cords as a pledge. The seal (suspended on a cord) was the equivalent of his signature/social security card. They culminated the deal. Tamar was used goods in that culture. She could not marry anyone else except a

family member of Judah. To withhold Shelah from her meant that she would be lonely & single & childless all of her days. Plus as a pagan, she held the family values of the Hittites who believed that it was the duty of the father of the deceased to raise up a child for the widow. She was confused but she was not the bad guy—it was Judah.

**Fractured Family Value #5: Use people and \_\_\_\_\_ them.**

Judah wanted a grandson so he arranged for Tamar to marry Er and then Onan, both of whom died. Judah didn't like it, so he lied to her and sent her home thinking that she would one day be a wife to his third son. He used her and then discarded her. He unknowingly did the same thing in a different way, when he saw an alluring woman along the road, and then paid for her pleasures.

**Review of Verses 20-24:** Judah tried to deliver the goat that was owed and collect his pledge, but Tamar took them and kept them. Judah called off the search for fear of becoming a laughingstock.

**Fractured Family Value #6: Maintain the \_\_\_\_\_ at all costs.**

Judah knew he was a creep - he just didn't want everyone else to know. So he maintained the facade.

**Review of Verses 25-30:** Tamar conceived with Judah's child. He decided to have her burned for her indiscretion. She produced his pledge and made it clear that he was guilty of multiple deceptions. To his credit he confessed his guilt and chose to no longer have relations with her. She eventually gave birth to twins. Zerah and Perez.

**ANALYSIS:** Is there a moral to the story? **A family is made or broken by its \_\_\_\_\_.**  
Fractured values will produce a fractured family. Healthy values will do us better.

**A. \_\_\_\_\_ your own values.**

We need to examine the values that we have been taught in our families. Affirm the good & ferret out the bad. If we do not, we will adopt them & pass them on. Identify the values that will be honored & cherished in your family. Make them reflect biblical standards. Write them out & teach them to your kids.

**B. Understand how family \_\_\_\_\_ reinforces our values.**

As the story continues we will find that Joseph was an amazingly pure individual – so different from the rest of his family. It appears that God was at work on Joseph's behalf. God used the expulsion by the brothers, to put a healthy distance between Joseph and the rest of his family. He had been removed from the incubator of evil. We need to understand the impact of extended family – both the bad and the good. If your family is relatively healthy – then you have a treasure that much of the rest of our culture envies and if you have children, one of the best things you can do for them, is to give them as much exposure as possible to your extended healthy family.

**C. God can take the worst family and bring out the \_\_\_\_\_ .**

It was from Judah's line through Perez that we eventually get the Messiah. The promises to Abraham to be a blessing to all families of the earth came through that line. If it had not been for Tamar and her craftiness, Judah's family line would have ended. If Judah's sickly family can produce such things, it is possible for your family too.

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**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Consider the home in which you were raised. Which values will you retain and which will you reject?
2. Name a couple of new biblically based values you should add.