



## COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

*This study guide is meant to help you learn and apply the truths of Scripture to your life right now, both individually and with your community group. To get the most from these guides, work through it on your own before gathering with your community group. If you aren't in a community group, consider attending the next Starting Point at Mercy Church, where you can take the next steps to connect with a community group in your area. RSVP at [mercycharlotte.com/connect](http://mercycharlotte.com/connect).*

## For Our Good: The Life of Joseph - Part 2

### INTRODUCTION

**THE BIG IDEA:** *The gospel breaks through the destruction caused by our sin.*

As we move into the second week of the *For Our Good* series, we encounter a bizarre story about the destructive nature of sin in our lives. In Genesis 38, we find the story of Judah and Tamar. Judah was one of Joseph's older brothers. He's the one that orchestrated Joseph's sale into slavery. We also learn in Genesis 38:12 that Judah's wife died, leaving him alone. Tamar was originally the wife of Judah's oldest son, Er. After Er died, because of his wickedness, Onan, his brother, united with Tamar. However, Onan failed to follow through in obedience to God and also died because of his wickedness. We pick up the story with Judah, Er and Onan's father, involved in a scandalous relationship with Tamar. Judah sleeps with Tamar, thinking she is a prostitute. His lust for sexual pleasure leads to countless lies, multiple cover up attempts, and an out of marriage pregnancy.

The key verse is Genesis 38:26. Here Judah is awakened to his sin. He finally stops blame shifting and scheming and realizes he is the cause of his sin. Which leads us to a fundamental truth: *only when you see your sin in its fully exposed, raw nastiness can you be ready for God's grace.*

The story concludes as Tamar gives birth to twins (Gen 38:27). Beyond their names, Perez and Zerah, we know very little about the lives of the children. One interesting note is that Perez, meaning breakthrough, is mentioned in the later genealogy of Jesus in the book of Matthew. As only God can, he brings forth good from a scandalous event. As we dive into the story of Judah and Tamar, we see that sin, especially sexual sin, causes great destruction in our lives. However, in the midst of destruction, we have an atoning sacrifice to make all things new. The truth of the gospel can and will break down all the destruction of sin. God shows us that he always has a greater plan, and that he will ultimately overcome sin to accomplish his purposes.

### **STUDY AND DISCUSSION**

In the message we heard of the brutal reality of sin in our lives, but also the beauty of redemption through Christ. As we work through these topics, use these questions as a reference point to help your understanding.

1. What stands out to you about the story of Judah and Tamar?
2. How have you experienced redemption in your own sin struggle?

### **INVESTIGATING SCRIPTURE:**

The following questions are designed to help you gain understanding of what the Bible teaches.

#### **Read Genesis 38:12-30**

1. What are some of the aspects of Judah and Tamar's story that show up in our everyday lives?
2. What are Judah's sins we see in Chapters 37-38?
3. Why is sexual sin in particular such a destructive form of sin?
4. As believers, what are the major consequences of consistent sin in our lives?

5. Why is it so important that we recognize our sin for what it truly is?
6. In spite of all the sin and corruption in Genesis 38, God brings about the lineage of Christ through Perez. How does this truth give us hope in the midst of our sin struggles?
7. If we now know sin is so destructive, why do we keep it hidden?
8. What promises from God give us courage to confess our sin even though it feels like it will be scary to do so?

*Bonhoffer: When you confess your sin to another Christian...The expressed, acknowledged sin has lost all its power...He is no longer alone with his evil for he has cast off his sin in confession and handed it over to God. It has been taken away from him. Now he stands in the fellowship of sinners who live by the grace of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. Now he can be a sinner and still enjoy the grace of God. He can confess his sins and in this very act find fellowship for the first time. The sin concealed separated him from the fellowship, made all his apparent fellowship a sham; the sin confessed has helped him to find true fellowship with the brethren in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

## **TAKEAWAYS**

These questions are intention to help you apply the truths from Genesis 38 to your own walk with the Lord.

1. What sin is causing destruction and separation from God in your life?
2. What is one step you can take this week to combat the sin struggles you are facing?

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<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together* (NY, NY Harper Collins, 1954) 113.

## **PRAYER**

Prayer is an essential component of your life as a follower of Christ, and an integral part of any healthy church body. Divide up into groups of 2-3 people and use the following points to guide you through a time of prayer together.

1. Pray for freedom and healing from the destructive sins in your life today.
2. Pray that Mercy Church would be a place God uses to fight the destruction of sin and that we would show the freedom of Christ is better than sin.
3. Pray that people in Charlotte would see the destructive nature of their sin and repent.