



# MESSAGE GUIDE

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

## EVERY NAME HAS A STORY- PART 5: GOD WANTS TO REDEEM YOUR STORY



GENESIS 38

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### 1. WHAT MOVIE OR BOOK CHARACTER'S STORY WOULD YOU RE-WRITE FOR A HAPPIER ENDING?

For many of us who grew up hearing the stories of Bible characters, we mostly think about their great victories and demonstrations of high moral standards. They are people to emulate, look up to, the heroes of the faith. It's usually the parts of the stories we tell our children. We tell our children the story of David defeating Goliath, but we hold off on the story of David having an affair and murdering the woman's husband after finding out that he got her pregnant. That's not a great bedtime story!

We like to tell the story of how Abraham was blessed by God to become the father of a great nation, but we tend to shy away from how he lied and pretended his wife was his sister to save his own skin.

Though it is probably wise be age-appropriate in our storytelling, but here's the downside:

We grow up thinking the Bible is full of stories of the heroes of the faith, and then we discover that our heroes let us down, and we don't have a way to find redemption in those stories.

We are in the fifth week of our series Every Name Has a Story, and we're taking a look at Jesus' story through the lens of his family tree in Matthew 1. *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers"* **(Matthew 1:1-2, ESV).**

We have looked at the names and stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now, the story of Judah. We're introduced to Judah in Scripture at the time of his birth recorded in Gen. 29: *"And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'This time I will praise the Lord.'" Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.* **(Genesis 29:35, ESV).**

#### **Background:**

The "she" here in our text is Leah, sister of Rachel, wife of Jacob. The only problem is that Jacob had another wife who happened to be Rachel, Leah's sister. Two sisters—one beautiful: Rachel; the other rather "homely": Leah. Leah kept thinking that if she could give Jacob sons, he would love her. She would have value. She could



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overcome the curse of being the ugly duckling who never measured up to her beautiful sister who was loved by Jacob far more than he loved her. But it never happened. There's nothing in Scripture that tells us that Jacob's love or value of Leah ever increased, even though she gave him sons when early on Rachel was barren. Leah had Reuben and said, "Now my husband will love me." She had Simeon and said, "Now he will hear me." Her third son she named Levi and said, "Now he will become attached to me." But it never happened. And then she had her fourth son and named him Judah, which means "praise," and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." "And then she ceased bearing."

So, we know from the very beginning of Judah's life, there was something different. His path had a different trajectory. His mother named him "Praise," and somehow after four sons, Leah stopped putting her hope and her identity and worth in her husband, but now she put it in the Lord.

The next time we see mention of Judah, outside of the birth order of Leah's sons in Gen. 35, is in Gen. 37 when Judah's younger brother, Joseph, was threatened to be murdered by the rest of his brothers, and Judah said, "*What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?*" (**Genesis 37:26, ESV**). Again, there's a hint of a different trajectory of Jacob's story than the story of his brothers. Maybe this is a trajectory of goodness, one of those Bible characters we should emulate and celebrate as one of the heroes of the faith.

And then we come to Genesis 38. Judah, whose name means "praise," who seemed to be different than his brothers and on a different trajectory that could lead to something so much better, has part of his life story that was anything but that which we would want to celebrate.

## 2. HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE TRAJECTORY OF YOUR STORY? WHAT HAPPENED IN YOUR STORY THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN EXPECTED?

Summary (Gen. 38:1-11):

During the time when Joseph's brothers (including Judah) sold him (Joseph) into slavery, Judah married a woman named Shua. They had three sons, the oldest was named Er, then Onan, followed by Shelah. Er married a woman named Tamar, but they didn't have any children, and Er came to an untimely death because he was "wicked in the sight of the Lord" (v. 7).

Now, there was a practice in that culture that eventually became part of the Mosaic Law called, Levirate Marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10): If a woman's husband died without a son, the husband's younger brother was



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obliged to marry the widow and provide a son in his name. The son would inherit the first husband's birthright and care for his mother.

And so, Judah told his younger brother, Onan, to fulfill his duty, but he refused, and “what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and [the Lord] put him to death” (verse 10). So, Judah told Tamar to go home and live in her father’s house, because he knew that the Levirate Marriage duty would fall to his youngest son, Shelah, and he was afraid that this son would die like his brothers. So, Judah sent his daughter in law away in shame to her father’s house. Now we come to verse 12.

## **Read Genesis 28:12-26.**

Remember how people in the Bible aren’t always given to us as models for us to follow? Well, look no further than Judah. If you want to start a movement and have people motivated to follow you, you don’t air your dirty laundry, you only tell the good stories. But over and over again, the Bible just lays it all out there—the good, the bad, and the ugly. WHY? Because even though we don’t like to admit it, we all have skeletons in our closet.

There are parts of our stories that no one else knows, and we want to keep those stories locked away where no one will ever find out. We are ashamed, and we live in dreadful fear that if anyone found out, they would be disgusted, and we would be cast away like lepers never to be loved again. And Deep down inside, we all want to be loved. This is one of the lies of the Devil— “If you let this story out, you’ll be rejected, you’ll be exposed, and people will know what a disgusting human being you really are.” We think we are beyond redemption.

Maybe the reason why the Bible tells these stories, like this story about Judah, is because it shows us that Whatever we have done in the past, we’re not the only ones...and that failure is not the final word.

## **3. DOES YOUR STORY HAVE A GOOD, BAD, AND UGLY? HOW DOES THE TRUTH THAT “YOUR FAILURES DO NOT HAVE THE FINAL WORD” IMPACT YOUR VIEW OF YOUR PAST OR EVEN YOUR CURRENT STRUGGLES?**

### **The story of Judah continues: Read Genesis 38:27-30.**

At least there were two healthy sons that were born. At least there’s some good that comes out of the bad. A man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, thinking she’s a prostitute, and she gets pregnant—that’s not a good thing, even in the eyes of many non-believers. But at least the twins were healthy, and maybe they’ll be able to live past the trauma of how they were conceived. But even that’s not the end of the story.



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Remember the names of the twins? Perez and Zerah. Why are those names so important? Let's go back to the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1: *This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar*” (**Matthew 1:1-3a, NIV**).

**Do you know what this means? This means that No story is beyond redemption!**

God uses this story of Judah, his sin, his vileness, and redeems it. Here's what's so powerful: The very One who brings ultimate redemption was born out of the stories of people who needed His redemption. Jesus came from Judah who beget Perez who beget Hezron who beget Ram who beget Amminadab all the way to David all the way to Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus who was called the Messiah.

If you ever think that your story is irredeemable, remember Judah, through whom came the Redeemer. That's the promise of the Gospel that no matter what your story includes, it doesn't have to remain hidden anymore, because God already knows. Bring it to Him, expose to His light, and it will melt away by His grace. And then your story that you thought was way beyond the reach of God's grace becomes a story of redemption!

**4. IS THERE A PART OF YOUR STORY THAT YOU HAVE KEPT HIDDEN? SPEND TIME IN PRAYER, BRINGING IT BEFORE GOD AND ASKING FOR HIS REDEMPTIVE WORK IN THAT AREA.**

## NEXT STEPS:

- If you would like to talk with someone about discovering God's grace and redemption, text "**GRACE**" to 317-707-6462, and we'll reach out to you.
- If you're ready to learn more about what it means to take your next step with Jesus, text "**FOLLOW**" to the number, and we'll reach out to you.

