

# People Like Us: Tamar

Week 1

12.4.2022

## Introduction:

A. Have you ever read a story and not connect with the characters?

1. I think so often we read about Joseph and Mary but we don't really connect with them.

a. We don't sympathize with the virgin Mary.

b. Maybe we don't relate to the righteous Joseph.

c. The Magi and shepherds are colorful people in a world we don't understand.

2. This is where genealogy comes in.

a. Matthew and Luke are the only two Gospel writers to give Jesus' lineage.

b. Both genealogies actually vary, showing some differences in how the writers traced the story of Jesus' earthly family.

3. Question: Does anyone here have a messed-up family?

### Photos

a. Some of our families look like the family from Full-House: well-intentioned adults but the kids run the show.

b. Or maybe you have an uncle kind of like Tony Soprano: you want to ask him about the family business and what used to happen, but you don't want to "swim with the fishes" whatever that means.

c. And we all have a Cousin Eddie, who is crazy, obnoxious and a bad example for the kids.

B. But, what if I told you that Jesus' family and lineage was more messed up than yours?

1. Here's the good news we get from Jesus' genealogy:
2. God used ordinary, flawed, and messed-up people leading up to Jesus' miraculous birth.
3. And that means that God can and will use people like us to spread the Gospel to the Nations.

Matthew 1:1-6 (CSB)

#### THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

**1** An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

#### FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

<sup>2</sup>Abraham fathered Isaac,  
Isaac fathered Jacob,  
Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,  
<sup>3</sup>Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar,  
Perez fathered Hezron,  
Hezron fathered Aram,  
<sup>4</sup>Aram fathered Amminadab,  
Amminadab fathered Nahshon,  
Nahshon fathered Salmon,  
<sup>5</sup>Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab,  
Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth,  
Obed fathered Jesse,

<sup>6</sup>and Jesse fathered King David.

#### FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife,

Genesis 38:1–30 (CSB)

#### JUDAH AND TAMAR

**38** At that time Judah left his brothers and settled near an Adullamite named Hirah. <sup>2</sup>There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua; he took her as a wife and slept with her. <sup>3</sup>She conceived and gave birth to a son, and he named him Er. <sup>4</sup>She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and named him Onan. <sup>5</sup>She gave birth to another son and named him Shelah. It was at Chezib that she gave birth to him.

<sup>6</sup>Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. <sup>7</sup>Now Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the LORD's sight, and the LORD put him to death. <sup>8</sup>Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife. Perform your duty as her brother-in-law and produce offspring for your brother." <sup>9</sup>But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he released his semen on the ground so that he would not produce offspring for his brother. <sup>10</sup>What he did was evil in the LORD's sight, so he put him to death also.

<sup>11</sup>Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He might die too, like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

<sup>12</sup>After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had finished mourning, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers. <sup>13</sup>Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." <sup>14</sup>So she took off her widow's clothes, veiled her face, covered herself, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had grown up, she had not been given to him as a wife. <sup>15</sup>When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.

<sup>16</sup>He went over to her and said, "Come, let me sleep with you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, "What will you give me for sleeping with me?"

<sup>17</sup>"I will send you a young goat from my flock," he replied.

But she said, "Only if you leave something with me until you send it."

<sup>18</sup> "What should I give you?" he asked.

She answered, "Your signet ring, your cord, and the staff in your hand."

So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. <sup>19</sup> She got up and left, then removed her veil and put her widow's clothes back on.

<sup>20</sup> When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get back the items he had left with the woman, he could not find her. <sup>21</sup> He asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?"

"There has been no cult prostitute here," they answered.

<sup>22</sup> So the Adullamite returned to Judah, saying, "I couldn't find her, and besides, the men of the place said, 'There has been no cult prostitute here.' "

<sup>23</sup> Judah replied, "Let her keep the items for herself; otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send this young goat, but you couldn't find her."

<sup>24</sup> About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law, Tamar, has been acting like a prostitute, and now she is pregnant."

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

<sup>25</sup> As she was being brought out, she sent her father-in-law this message: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these items belong." And she added, "Examine them. Whose signet ring, cord, and staff are these?"

<sup>26</sup> Judah recognized them and said, "She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her intimately again.

<sup>27</sup> When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb. <sup>28</sup> As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a scarlet thread around it, announcing, "This one came out first." <sup>29</sup> But then he pulled his hand back, out came his brother, and she said, "What a breakout you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. <sup>30</sup> Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread tied to his hand, came out, and was named Zerah.

PRAYER:

Lord, help me to tell your story. Through this, may we see your love for us in the midst of our sinfulness. I ask that, through this word, we are

encouraged to place our story, with all our hurts and pains and struggles, into your redeeming hands. Remind us that, through Jesus, that the ending of our story is infinitely better than our beginning. God, open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our spirits to feel the power, and the glory, and the honor presented forth in your Word. Jesus name, Amen.

## 1. Jesus' genealogy in Matthew serves a purpose.

A. Matthew's purpose, in large part, is to show Jesus' credentials.

1. Matthew is a Jew, writing to Jews.
2. So he wants to make two things clear:
  - a. Jesus can trace his heritage to Abraham (this appeals to Jews and Gentiles).
  - b. He also needs to show that Jesus is the heir of King David, and has the necessary Messianic lineage.
3. The genealogy provides the confirmation that Jesus is the promised Savior, the descendent of David.

B. Our families' story is part of our story.

1. For example: **This may not mean much to people not from around here.**
  - a. But it seems like to me that everyone in this part of the country is somehow related to either Davy Crockett or Jessie James.
  - b. Especially when we were kids, we often tell our stories vicariously through our relatives.
2. As Matthew lists Jesus' earthly lineage, he is connecting the Jesus story to everyone's story.
  - a. But sometimes it feels as if there is a disconnect, because Our story is messy.

b. We have a lot more in common with people like Judah and Tamar than we do with Mary.

3. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus not only uses people like Mary and Joseph but also the Cousin Eddies.

4. One scholar points out, "There is no pattern of righteousness in the lineage of Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

a. Jesus is the only perfect person in the human story.

b. Everyone else is, simply, people like us.

c. The Good News is that God uses the most unlikely of people to carry out His plans and purposes.

d. The women in Jesus' lineage point to this truth.

2. In a world dominated by men, the mention of women is significant.

A. Remember, this is Matthew, the Jewish believer, here.

1. Christianity revolutionized the role and importance of women, restoring their value closer to the value that God gave women in the Garden.

a. Do not believe the lies that Christianity subjugates women.

b. When you understand the historical context, the opportunities presented to women in the NT were revolutionary.

c. Furthermore, consider the much newer religion, Islam founded around 600 AD, that is completely restrictive of women to this day.

2. Therefore, the mention of these five women in the text should capture our attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, Michael J. 2004. [Matthew](#). The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

B. Most lineages do not include women, so when they do, we should take notice.<sup>i</sup> (in the footnotes of my notes, five reasons are presented)

1. These names, and especially the women mentioned here, show “the all-embracing love of God”. (NIVAC)
2. Furthermore, these women demonstrate that salvation was possible for all people and people groups. (in particular, the women mentioned are not Jewish).
3. Just as important, we see through Jesus’ genealogy that when God’s chosen people are unfaithful, God will use anyone who is willing, even if they weren’t exactly right with God to begin with.

C. When we read Jesus’ genealogy, we read the story of ordinary but messed up people.

1. This family of Abraham was chosen not because they were holier than everyone, but because of God’s sovereign choice.
2. God has the right to choose and use whoever He wants.
  - a. God chose the family of Abraham.
  - b. And the sons of Jacob (also called Israel), would serve as Jesus’ earthly family.

### 3. The Story of Judah and Tamar.

A. Judah is proof that God has plans and purposes for people that I would disqualify.

1. The family, or tribe, of Judah plays a HUGE part in the Bible story.
  - a. God chose this family to bring the Messiah into Earth.
  - b. This elite role is viewed in places like Exodus and Numbers where the Tribe of Judah leads Israel in the march to the Promised Land.
  - c. God himself declared, “Send Judah first”.
  - d. 400 years after Genesis 38, Judah’s tribe is in the lead.

2. But if this was our story, it would have stopped here.
  - a. And it almost did.
  - b. God saw the evil of two of Judah's sons and killed them.
  - c. Perhaps, the only reason Judah wasn't killed was because of God's promise and plan to Abraham.

**B.** Judah's story is contrasted with his brother Joseph.

- 1.** Genesis Chapter 37: The brothers, sons of Jacob/Israel, sell Joseph into slavery.
2. Genesis Chapter 39 is the story of Joseph in Potiphar's house, where Potiphar's wife begs Joseph to sleep with her but he won't and is punished.
3. Genesis Chapter 38 shows how utterly corrupt Judah and his family were.
  - a. Judah marries a non-Jew, and is never named.
  - b. Then Judah's oldest two sons were utterly evil.
  - c. Er, the oldest, was so evil that God "put him to death."
  - d. We will look at Onan's sin in a bit.
4. Truth is, if we would have picked a great, great, grandfather for Jesus' family, I would have picked Joseph not Judah.

**C.** Tamar's story is brief but tragic.

1. Tamar, in Jesus' lineage, is the first of several women mentioned who had NO right be women of God but were.
  - a. We can understand God using someone like Mary, but Tamar is a strange choice.
  - b. She isn't Jewish.
2. She is married to Judah's son, Er.
  - a. Er is so evil in God's sight, that the Lord kills him.



b. We don't know the sin, but it's the same phrase used to describe the evil men of Sodom in Gen. 13:13.<sup>2</sup>

3. This leads to Tamar being "given" in marriage to the next brother, Onan.

Let's talk about this for a minute.

#### 4. The Sin of Onan.

We do deal with adult content in this section. I don't apologize for the content, since it is part of the Christian conversation regarding this text. But I do strive to be respectful and proper.

But if you were wondering if/when you should have the TALK with your kids, and they are with you in the service today, then you need to plan on having that talk soon lol You're welcome

A. I've heard this passage used for all types of purposes.

1. I've heard it used to teach against contraception.
2. I've heard it used in discussion to "self-pleasure".
3. But neither of these is the reason for Onan's sin and judgment.

B. The context and culture are the key factors here.

1. Family, and the sustaining of family, was vital.
  - a. The only way to ensure a family's continued existence was to have male children.
  - b. Onan had the responsibility to ensure that his brother's family kept going.
  - c. This is called "levirate marriage".

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<sup>2</sup> Pettus, David D. 2016. "Tamar, Daughter-in-Law of Judah." In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

**2. Levirate:** It was the duty of the nearest male relative of a deceased man to marry the childless widow and to father her children. Her firstborn son would then be acknowledged as the son of her deceased husband and would inherit his property. This practice is known as levirate marriage (from "levir," Latin for "husband's brother").<sup>3</sup>

3. This term "Levirate" will apply also to Ruth further in the series.

C. The enormity of Onan's sin is in its studied outrage against the family, against his brother's widow and against his own body.

1. The standard English versions fail to make clear that this was his persistent practice. *When* should be translated 'whenever'.<sup>4</sup>

2. The sin of Onan, in other words, is that he slept with Tamar often with no intention of fulfilling his responsibilities to her, his brother, his family, or to God.

3. Onan enjoyed the opportunity with Tamar, without the responsibility.

4. Therefore, Onan, like his brother, is killed by the Lord.

## 5. The sins of Judah.

A. The first sin of Judah is betrothing the youngest to Tamar with no intention of them marrying.

1. Shelah was next, but was too young.

2. But just like Judah's father was super protective of Benjamin after Joseph was thought dead, Judah does the same with Shelah.

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<sup>3</sup> McWhirter, Jocelyn. 2016. "Marriage." In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>4</sup> Kidner, Derek. 1967. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 1. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

3. Judah sends Tamar back to her family's home, and tells her to wait.

**B. But Tamar's waiting was more than waiting, it was betrothal.**

1. So technically, Shelah and Tamar were married but not intimate.

2. Tamar was required by law to remain faithful to a kid that was intentionally being kept from her.

*C. Desperate people do desperate things.*

1. Please remember: Just because something is mentioned and used for God's glory, that does NOT mean this is how we are supposed to do it.

2. Tamar, and her family, realizes that she has been set up by her father-in-law, Judah.

a. By this time, Judah's wife has died.

b. So he is sexually vulnerable.

c. Let's be honest, we permit many bad things when we are vulnerable.

**6. Be sure your sins will find you out.**

**A. Two things are clear:**

1. Tamar set Judah up.

2. But Judah was looking for trouble.

3. He was INTENTIONALLY looking for someone to hook up with and leave.

**B. Tamar is shrewd here.**

1. She knows deep down that she was destined and called to have children and to bless the family in this way.

a. She had been robbed of this blessing by an evil husband, an evil second-husband/brother-in-law, and her father-in-law.

b. She has no legal recourse: no court to apply to.

c. She does something desperate.

2. She is DETERMINED to receive what she believes is hers.

a. That is to have not just any children, but children in the line and tribe of Judah.

b. In a way, her actions are the desperate moves of a woman with faith.

1. This faith was not perfect.

2. Her decisions are justifiable, but not perfect.

3. But God sees something in her that nobody in this narrative realizes yet.

c. There was only one more way for that to happen.

3. Tamar plays on the Judah family weakness: sexuality.

C. Tamar also knows that, if she does this and gets caught, she would be called an adulterous and killed.

1. So she demands 3 articles from Judah to "guarantee" payment.

a. These 3 articles, the ring, the cord, and the staff, are clearly the property of one person and can be traced back to Judah.

b. So she demands a down-payment.

2. But she has to hide her identity:

a. But wouldn't Judah recognize his own daughter-in-law?

b. Not necessarily because she was completely covered, face and body, only exposing what needed to be exposed.

c. In our culture, this seems impossible but was likely far more common in non-western culture than we realize.

3. After the deed is done, Judah leaves and Tamar goes home, HOPING to be pregnant.

## 7. Pregnancy, Execution, and a really big OOPS.

A. News travels to Judah, where he is told "your daughter in law is acting like a prostitute and is pregnant."

1. This is a really big deal because she is BETHROTHED to the youngest son.

2. Here is a woman, found to be pregnant, while legally bound, but not intimate, with another man.

3. Does this sound like a familiar, Christmas story?

4. The legal punishment for breaking a betrothal was being stoned to death.

5.. Unlike the righteous Joseph in the Christmas story, Judah pursues the death penalty.

B. Judah doesn't just want Tamar dead, he wants her punished.

1. He doesn't know she was the one who he slept with.

2. Yet he wants her not stoned to death, but burned to death.

3. What is motivating Judah's extreme hatred?

a. He is probably blaming HER for his sons' death, instead of laying the sin and blame upon his sons.

b. Also, by her dying, it would give Judah opportunity to break the betrothal between her and the youngest son.

c. Finally, he would be done with this "mistake" that he had made and could start over.

C. But, then Tamar presents the evidence of Judah's guilt.

1. Presented with Judah's signet ring, and his cord, and his staff, Judah does something that changes the course of his family.

2. He repents.

1. Judah confesses that Tamar, and not himself, is "righteous".

2. Judah declares her in the right, and himself in the wrong.

3. The text doesn't say Tamar marries Shelah.

4. But it does say that Judah did not sleep with her again.

- D. 6-months after this, Tamar gives birth to twins.

1. Just like Esau and Jacob (who was Judah's father), Tamar gives birth to fighting twins.

2. Just like with Esau and Jacob, the youngest receives the blessing while the oldest misses out.

3. And, technically, the sons Perez and Zerah carried on the lineage of the evil son Er and not Judah.

4. And you thought your family was messed up.

8. Result: This incident changed the direction of the whole family.

- A. Sometime after this incident, a famine hits the land where Judah and his brothers and his father Jacob are living.

1. This story is told in the last chapters of Genesis.

2. What we see about Judah is a changed man.

3. It's a long story, but their brother Joseph who is alive and living in Egypt sets the family up to determine if their hearts are right.

- a. Have they changed?

- b. Or are they still the evil family that he remembers.

4. After several tests, Judah makes this statement before Joseph:

Genesis 44:16 (CSB)

<sup>16</sup> “What can we say to my lord?” Judah replied. “How can we plead? How can we justify ourselves? God has exposed your servants’ iniquity. We are now my lord’s slaves—both we and the one in whose possession the cup was found.”

B. From this point forward, Judah’s role changes.

1. Too often we define our lives by our Genesis 38 moments, instead of Genesis 44.

2. If you quit at Genesis 38, before repentance, before heart change, before redemption, then you and your family never get to experience the blessings that come much later.

C. The same, incestuous family of Genesis 38 leads all of Israel in battle 400 years later.

1. It was through this family that would bring forth the perfect, sinless, Son of God.

2. It took a while, but God is faithful.

Matthew 1:17 (CSB)

<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations.

3. It was 42 generations later (so 39 or 40 from Judah), but Tamar is praised for her tenacity and belief in God’s promise.

## 9. One final Story:

John 8:2–11 (CSB)

### AN ADULTERESS FORGIVEN

<sup>2</sup>At dawn he went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to him. He sat down and began to teach them.

<sup>3</sup>Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. <sup>4</sup>“Teacher,” they said to him, “this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. <sup>5</sup>In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” <sup>6</sup>They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him.

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup>When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, “**The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.**”

<sup>8</sup>Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. <sup>9</sup>When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. <sup>10</sup>When Jesus stood up, he said to her, “**Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?**”

<sup>11</sup>“No one, Lord,” she answered.

“**Neither do I condemn you,**” said Jesus. “**Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.**”]

A. Look at what Jesus did.

1. The ONE who traces his lineage to Tamar, and Rahab, and Bathsheba.
2. The one whose family included immoral moments and lifestyles including Judah, David, and Solomon stands among the scribes and Pharisees, they themselves descendants of Abraham like himself.

B. Yet, **when all the world is calling to kill the Adulterous woman, Jesus does not.**

1. At first he pauses an uncomfortable length of time.
2. And he writes words in the dirt that we DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY SAY.
3. *But what if...Jesus was writing down the names of those in His story that deserved to die but received grace instead!*

a. What if he wrote in the dust the names:



b. Judah, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, David, Bathsheba, and even his mother Mary?

c. What if he wrote in the dust the sins of the men in the group condemning the woman?

d. What if he was writing MERCY!

C. You who are without sin, cast the first stone.

1. In Genesis 38, it was Judah calling for Tamar's death.

2. In John 8, the Pharisees called for this woman's death.

3. But Jesus called for mercy instead.

D. The difference between Jesus and his ancestor Judah was that Jesus was perfect and sinless.

1. Jesus could have thrown the stone.

2. But, instead, He says "go and sin no more."

Close: Is there anyone righteous in your family?

A. That's the loud question from Judah and Tamar's story here.

1. No one in this story is perfect.

2. And this story is not a great example of what we should do.

B. But each woman in Jesus' genealogy teaches us this It only takes 1.

1. It only takes 1 person to change a family.

2. It takes 1 person to change a community.

3. It takes 1 person, used by God, to bring forth God's power.

C. The story of Tamar does not commend prostitution.

1. It does not give us permission to sin so that good might happen.

2. The end does not justify the means.

3. But what it does tell us is that God sees us, and our pain and struggles and sin.
4. God sees us in the midst of our imperfect situations.
5. God sees us as we are.
6. And He also sees our faith.

Prayer: Two groups we pray for today.

A. For those who have experienced so much pain, and heartache, and trouble, and mistakes, know that God sees you.

1. And He isn't calling out to you with a voice of condemnation, but a voice to forgive.
2. Perhaps you have been living with guilt, condemnation, and the belief that God cannot and won't use you.
3. Today, I'm here to tell you that you are valuable in God's eyes.
  - a. Your family might have treated you like trash.
  - b. Your story be messed up.
  - c. But know that **Jesus loves to bring order out of chaos.**
4. If you have never accepted Jesus' forgiveness for your sins, we pray that for you today.

B. Second, we pray for those who are making a stand for our families, our community, and nation.

1. We believe that God does use people like us to be used for His glory.
2. Today, we pray for those who are willing to say to Jesus "Here am I, use me."

## NOTES:

The mention of a mother alongside a father occurs also in Old Testament genealogies; cf. 1 Chronicles 1:32; 2:17–21, 24, 26, etc. V 1, p 79 p 79. The mention of *Tamar* as the mother of *Perez and Zerah* is in fact derived directly from 1 Chronicles 2:4, and that of Bath-sheba in v. 6 from 1 Chronicles 3:5. But the four mothers selected for mention form a striking group. Probably all four were non-Jews (Tamar was a local girl, so presumably a Canaanite, Gen. 38:11, 13–14; Bathsheba was the wife of a Hittite), indicating Matthew's interest in the universal relevance of Jesus' coming (cf. the Magi of 2:1–12); and in each case there were at least suspicions of some form of marital irregularity, though all four were in fact vindicated by God's subsequent blessing. They form an impressive precedent for Jesus' birth of an unmarried mother from an obscure background. *Rahab* is otherwise unknown as mother of *Boaz*; presumably the harlot of Jericho (Josh. 2:1, etc.) is in Matthew's mind, though this identification poses chronological problems.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> **Men and women.** Most scholars see the inclusion of the five women in Jesus' genealogy as another clue to Matthew's emphases. As noted above, women were not always included in Old Testament genealogies. When they were included, there was usually some particular reason. Speculation about Matthew's purpose has a long history, but he seems to have a variety of reasons for including these women in Jesus' genealogy. Something positive can be said for each of the following, although it may be difficult to narrow Matthew's purpose to any one alone.

(1) Women had experienced increasing marginalization and even abuse within Jewish society. Jesus' line includes Tamar, a woman wrongfully denied motherhood by the deceitfulness of men. The women in the genealogy represent the gender equality that had been denied them within much of Jewish culture. From the beginning Jesus came to restore the personal equality and dignity of women with men.

(2) Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba had reputations for morally indiscreet behavior and character. They are examples of women sinners Jesus came to save, a powerful statement about the offer of salvation to those of either gender.

(3) The first four women may have been Gentiles, although the ethnicity of Tamar and Bathsheba is unclear. It is clear, however, that Ruth was a Moabitess, and to the tenth generation a Moabite was not to be admitted to the congregation (Deut. 23:3). Rahab was undoubtedly a Canaanite. Matthew may thus be indicating that salvation is a possibility for

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<sup>5</sup> France, R. T. 1985. [\*Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#). Vol. 1. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

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every ethnic group, which is a strong motif in this Gospel (Matt. 8:5–13; 28:18–20). Jesus Messiah, who could not have male Gentiles in his ancestry, nonetheless had [p 68](#) Gentile ancestors in these women, suggesting his suitability as the Messiah for Gentiles as well as for Jews.

(4) The women mentioned had unusual marriages, sexual scandals, or suspicions of having had illegitimate children. Matthew may be disarming prejudice against Mary's circumstances by those Jews who might forget their own history, even as he refutes charges of illegitimacy against Mary (1:18–25).

(5) These women each represent a crucial period in Israel's history when a Gentile displayed extraordinary faith in contrast to Jews who lacked courage and faith: Tamar versus Judah's disloyalty, Rahab versus the desert generation's faithlessness, Ruth versus the unfaithful Israelites at the time of the judges, and Uriah versus David's sinfulness with Bathsheba. The messianic line was preserved, even through Gentiles, when Israel was unfaithful.<sup>i</sup>