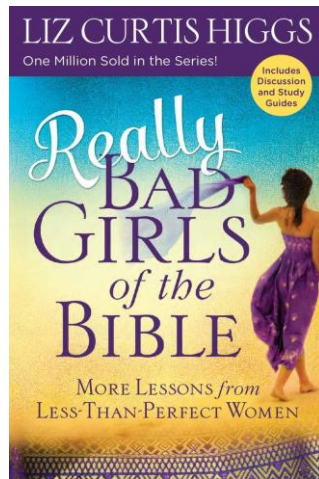


Word by Word with Liz Curtis Higgs on the Faith Radio Network

Bible Study Guide for February 24-25, 2018 | Tamar the Widow

from *Really Bad Girls of the Bible* by Liz Curtis Higgs



1. Read Genesis 38:1-30, which captures the story of Tamar and Judah in a single chapter. We learn in Genesis 28:1 the sort of woman a good Israelite was *not* to select for a bride. Yet, according to Genesis 38:2, what kind of bride did Judah choose for himself? As the son of Jacob, grandson of Isaac, and great-grandson of Abraham, Judah *knew* better than to marry someone of a different faith. Why do you think he did so? What do Deuteronomy 10:12-13 and Leviticus 18:4-5 tell us about God and his laws? Judah and his sons demonstrate what happens when God's laws are ignored. In both Genesis 38:7 and 38:10 it is clear that God deemed Judah's sons worthy of death for their wickedness. How do you reconcile a God of judgment with a God of grace? Read Job 34:12 and Psalm 111:7, then answer from your heart.
2. Judah brought Tamar into his household, accepted responsibility for her—then sent her packing. What does 1 Timothy 5:8 tell us about taking care of family members? In Genesis 38:11 we learn what motivated Judah's decision to send Tamar away. According to God's law in Deuteronomy 25:5, was Judah justified in keeping his third son, Shelah, away from Tamar? How do you view Judah's protection of Shelah—was it a sin or parental love in action? What prompts you to say that?
3. However alone and abandoned Tamar must have felt, it's clear that God saw Tamar's misery and did not desert her. How might Psalm 68:5 and Job 36:6 fit the widow Tamar in her bereft situation? Some see Tamar as a harlot, others a heroine. Is there anything about Tamar you appreciate? Her creativity, perhaps, or her shrewdness? How might she have justified her deliberate, deceptive actions? Do you ever struggle with a biblical story like this one, where it's difficult to see God's hand at work, even though we know he's in everything? How might Romans 11:33-36 and Isaiah 55:8-11 assure you that, unfathomable as his ways may be, our God is sovereign?

4. In Genesis 38:24, we learn that Tamar was accused of prostitution, with her unborn child as proof. Judah's response was heated with self-righteous fury. What does James 1:19-20 teach us about anger, and how is that truth demonstrated here? When Tamar revealed Judah's cord and staff, as recorded in Genesis 38:25, did she openly accuse him of wrongdoing or allow him to confess on his own? What wisdom do you find in her way of handling things? How would you interpret Judah's response in Genesis 38:26, "She is more righteous than I"?
5. According to Genesis 38:27-30, Tamar gave birth to two sons—not an accident of nature but a plan of God. What might those twins signify? What purpose do you believe God had for including Tamar and Judah in the lineage of Christ? How could you use this story to help a friend with a checkered past embrace the hope that God offers?
6. What's the most important lesson you learned from the unsettling, yet ultimately redemptive story of Tamar the widow?