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INTRODUCTION

Genesis 37:2 identifies this narrative as “The story of the family of Jacob.” The insertion of Judah’s story, one of Jacob’s sons, in chapter 38 highlights the cycle of deception and shame in Jacob’s family. This cycle, however, can be broken.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Read Genesis 38

1. What lie does Judah make in Genesis chapter 38? Is this lie justified?
2. John spoke of the cycle of shame and suffering in his message. How do these themes affect Jacob’s family in chapters 37 and 38? What role does God have or not have in either of these stories?
3. Where does Judah’s attitude seem to change in the narrative? What sparks this change? Is an experience like this enough to change someone’s character or does it simply inspire remorse?
4. These two chapters do not mention the word “sin”, but pastors have referred to this story as “Judah’s sin”. How would you define this word? Would you judge the actions of Judah as sinful?

5. Is there a correlation between sin, shame and suffering? Does someone have to suffer or experience shame in order for something to be considered sinful?

6. How can the cycle of sin, shame and suffering come to an end? What's the first step that Judah takes in Genesis 38:26? Is God necessary in this process? (Discuss John 16:7-11)

7. Judah's story takes place some 1500 years before the birth of Jesus. We, however, stand on the other side of history. Based on Romans 8:31-39, what difference does the life of Jesus make in your relation to sin, suffering and shame? (Consider also the promise made in Isaiah 53:4-6)

8. The New Testament identifies this break in the cycle as "new life". Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 6:2-14. What excites you most about these two passages? What is most challenging?

MOVING FORWARD

New life is not something you can create for yourself—it comes only through the life Jesus freely gives. Confessing your need for this life begins the process (Romans 10:9-11). Prayer may not initially appear powerful or practical, but it is essential. It is the means by which you communicate your dependence upon God and receive power for living "New Life".