

BROKEN *Promises*

A NOVEL
INSPIRED BY THE STORY OF
JUDAH AND TAMAR



Andy "The Storyteller" Lewter

BROKEN PROMISES

Book Club Study Guide

A Three-Week Journey Through Betrayal, Courage,
and Redemption

Based on the Novel by Andy C. Lewter

Inspired by the Biblical Story of Judah and Tamar •
Genesis 38

SESSION 1: July 28, 2026 • SESSION 2: August 4,
2026 • SESSION 3: August 11, 2026

Tuesdays • 7:00 PM – 7:30 PM

“A God Who Turns Broken Promises
Into Purpose.”

Welcome to the Book Club

This study guide is your companion for three powerful Tuesday evening sessions built around *Broken Promises*, the debut novel by pastor and author Andy C. Lewter. Whether you are a lifelong churchgoer, a casual reader, or someone who has never opened a Bible, this book club was created for you.

Broken Promises is a modern retelling of Genesis 38 — the ancient story of Tamar, a woman who was wronged by the men in power around her and who refused to accept injustice as her final chapter. The novel transplants that story into 21st-century New York City, tracing the lives of two prominent Black families whose roots run back to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre on Black Wall Street.

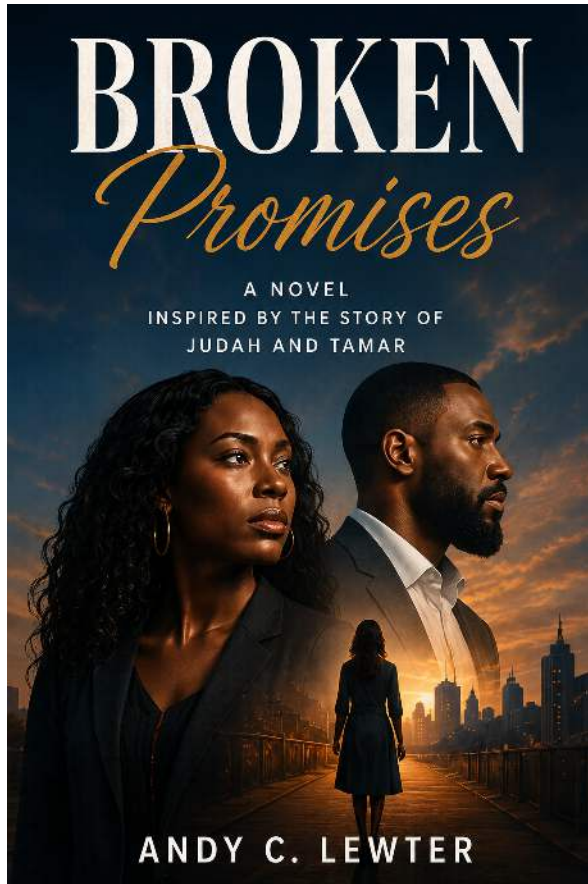
Broken Promises Book Club Study Guide

Over three weeks, we will read the novel together, explore its connections to scripture, and ask the questions that matter most: questions about family, identity, justice, faith, and what it means to know your own worth.

“Three Sessions. One Powerful Story. A Lifetime of Impact.”

Who Is This Book Club For?

This series is designed for anyone who:



Broken Promises Book Club Study Guide

- Loves reading and wants to explore stories that go deeper than the surface
- Is curious about the Bible but finds traditional Bible study intimidating
- Has experienced broken promises, betrayal, or seasons of waiting in their own life
- Wants to connect with others in a warm, welcoming, and judgment-free environment
- Is searching for greater clarity about their own identity, value, and purpose
- Is part of a church community looking for an engaging alternative to conventional study

You do not need to be a theology expert. You do not need to have read the whole novel before session one. You just need to come as you are.

Series at a Glance

Session

Title



Chapters

Date

1

Roots, Promises & Arranged Unions

Chapters 1–8

July 28, 2026

2

Betrayal, Waiting & the Fight for Justice

Chapters 9–16

August 4, 2026

3

Confrontation, Reckoning & Redemption

Broken Promises Book Club Study Guide

Chapters 17–24

August 11, 2026

All sessions meet on Tuesdays from 7:00 PM to 7:30 PM. Each session includes a brief reading recap, group discussion, biblical connections, and a closing prayer.

SESSION ONE • July 28, 2026

Roots, Promises, and Arranged Unions

Chapters 1–8 | Prologue through The Second Marriage

What We Will Cover

We open with one of the darkest chapters of American history — the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the destruction of Black Wall Street. Through the eyes of the Jacobson and Cohen families, we witness how survival, loss, and the drive to rebuild shape the expectations placed on Tamar over a century later. We then follow Tamar as she is drawn into an arranged marriage with Er Jacobson, and then, after his sudden death, into a second arranged union with his volatile brother Onan.

What You Will Learn

- How the legacy of the Tulsa Race Massacre connects to the intergenerational pressure on modern Black families
- The biblical institution of levirate marriage (Genesis 38:1–11) — its original purpose and what it reveals about how societies have historically treated widows
- How systemic expectations of duty, legacy, and family can override individual voice and desire
- Why Tamar, a brilliant attorney, ultimately sets aside her own aspirations to honor family obligation

Scripture Connections

Genesis 38:1–11

Judah's sons Er and Onan; the levirate marriage law; and the promise of Shelah — the foundational passage for the entire novel.

Genesis 29:16–28

Jacob's own arranged marriages to Leah and Rachel — a reminder that deception and family manipulation within arranged unions is an ancient pattern, not a modern invention.

Ruth 1:1–18

Naomi and Ruth's bond amid devastating loss — a companion text on loyalty, chosen family, and faithfulness when the world offers nothing but grief.

How You Will Benefit

Session One invites you to see your own story within Tamar's. Many of us carry the weight of family expectations, generational pressures, or unspoken obligations that were handed to us without our consent. This session creates space to name those weights honestly — and to begin asking whether the story we inherited is the story we are meant to live.

Applying the Lessons to Your Life

- Reflect on a time when family or community expectations shaped a major decision in your life. Was that a gift or a burden — or both?
- Consider the inheritance you carry — not financial, but emotional and spiritual. What stories, fears, or values were passed down to you? Which ones still serve you?
- Think about someone in your life who, like Tamar, is navigating a situation they did not choose. How might you offer support rather than judgment?

Self-Worth Reflection

“You are not simply the sum of what was expected of you. Your value was never contingent on fulfilling someone else’s agenda.”

Tamar's identity is constantly defined by others in Session One — she is a daughter, a wife, a widow, an heir, a vehicle for legacy. One of the most powerful invitations of this session is to ask: What would it mean to define yourself on your own terms? Your worth is not measured by who you married, what family you belong to, or what expectations you have or have not met. It is intrinsic. It was given to you by God before any of those arrangements were made.

Discussion Questions

1

The Prologue opens with the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Why do you think the author chose Black Wall Street as the foundation of both families' legacies? How does that history shape what Tamar is expected to be one hundred years later?

2

Tamar's friend Rita tells her, "You are a daughter of Spelman, a graduate of Howard, and you deserve better than this." What forces — internal and external — lead Tamar to set aside her own voice? Can you relate to that tension?

3

The biblical levirate law was designed to protect a widow's rights and provide her an heir. In the novel, who is the arrangement truly protecting — Tamar, or the Jacobson family's empire?

4

Er is portrayed as secretly entangled in a dangerous underworld. Does the novel make his death feel tragic, just, or both? How does this complicate your reading of the ancient story?

5

Broken Promises Book Club Study Guide

What do you think the author is saying about the institution of marriage — then and now? When, if ever, is personal sacrifice for the sake of family or community truly justified?

SESSION TWO • August 4, 2026

Betrayal, Waiting, and the Fight for Justice

Chapters 9–16 | Life with Onan through Setting the Stage

What We Will Cover

Session Two follows Tamar into the most painful chapters of her story. Her marriage to Onan descends into abuse and manipulation. His death by drunk driving leaves her doubly widowed, and Judah sends her home with a vague promise that his youngest son, Shelah, will marry her when he comes of age. Years pass. Shelah grows into a man. The promise is never honored. When Tamar finally discovers in a family journal that Judah never intended to keep his word, the waiting game is over — and a plan for reckoning begins to form.

What You Will Learn

- The deeper meaning of Onan's sin in Genesis 38 — not merely a physical act, but a violation of covenant and a betrayal of the vulnerable
- How institutional and familial power structures can trap individuals — especially women — in cycles of waiting and false hope
- What it means to assemble a “support team” when navigating injustice — as Tamar does in Chapter 13
- How Tamar's growing identification with her biblical namesake becomes a source of courage and resolve
- The spiritual discipline of waiting — and the moment when waiting must give way to action

Scripture Connections

Genesis 38:8–14

Onan's refusal and death; Judah's broken promise about Shelah; Tamar's decision to take matters into her own hands.

Psalm 37:7–9

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” — a meditation on enduring injustice without losing faith.

Proverbs 31:10–25

The woman of valor who plans, acts, and is not passive in the face of injustice — a counterpoint to the idea that faithful women simply endure.

How You Will Benefit

Session Two speaks directly to anyone who has been given a promise that was quietly broken — in a relationship, a workplace, a church, or a family. It names the slow erosion of hope that comes with waiting for justice that never arrives. And it offers something more honest than platitudes: a model for what it looks like to pivot from victim to strategist, from waiting to acting, without losing your integrity or your faith.

Applying the Lessons to Your Life

- Identify a promise — spoken or implied — that has gone unfulfilled in your life. What have you done, or what could you do, to reclaim what was taken from you?
- Think about your own “support team.” Who are the Ritas in your life — the people who tell you the truth and stand beside you when things fall apart?
- Consider the difference between waiting faithfully and waiting passively. Is there an area of your life where God might be inviting you to move from endurance to action?

Self-Worth Reflection

“Your worth is not diminished by what was withheld from you. A broken promise says everything about the one who broke it — and nothing about your value.”

One of the most damaging effects of betrayal is how it can make us internalize the message that we simply were not worth keeping the promise for. Tamar battles this very lie through Session Two. When Judah's own journal reveals he never intended to honor his word, it is tempting to read that as a verdict on her worth. It is not. It is a verdict on his character. This session invites you to separate what others have withheld from you from what you actually deserve — and to rediscover that your value was never in their hands to begin with.

Discussion Questions

1

Onan's sin in Genesis 38 is one of the most debated passages in scripture. In the novel, his failure manifests as abuse and deliberate deception. How does this modernization deepen your understanding of the ancient story?

2

After Onan's death, both Judah and Tamar's own father greet her return with cold disappointment. Where should she have been able to turn? Who are the people in your community who show up for the Tamars in their lives — and who are the ones who fail them?

3

In Chapter 14, Tamar finds courage in her biblical namesake. What does it mean to find identity and strength in an ancient story? Have you ever drawn courage from a historical or scriptural figure in a similar way?

4

Tamar's legal team proposes three paths to justice: breach of contract, emotional distress, and a historical reckoning tied to Tulsa. How do these modern options compare to Tamar's only tool in Genesis 38 — a bold and risky personal act? Does having more options make justice easier or more complicated?

5

Have you, or someone you know, ever waited faithfully for a promise that was never meant to be kept? What did that experience reveal about trust, power, and faith?

SESSION THREE • August 11, 2026

Confrontation, Reckoning, and Redemption

Chapters 17–24 | The Death of Rachel Jacobson through Epilogue

What We Will Cover

In our final session, the moral center of the Jacobson world — Rachel, the family matriarch — is lost to cancer. Her death removes the last restraining influence on Judah, who retreats into a life of secret indulgence. Rita, working at the club where Judah spends his evenings, alerts Tamar. What follows is the most daring chapter of Tamar's journey: a complete physical and personal transformation, a carefully laid honey trap, and an encounter that mirrors the ancient roadside confrontation in Genesis 38. When Tamar reveals herself — and her pregnancy — the reckoning has arrived. We close by reflecting on what redemption, justice, and legacy truly mean.

What You Will Learn

- How the ancient confrontation between Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38 maps onto the novel's climactic encounter
- The significance of Judah's declaration in Genesis 38:26: "She is more righteous than I" — one of the rarest moments of male accountability in all of scripture
- Why Tamar appears in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 — and what that radical inclusion says about God's view of women who have been wronged
- What the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18) teaches us about refusing to accept injustice as a final answer
- How to distinguish between revenge and justice — and why that distinction matters for healing

Scripture Connections

Genesis 38:15–26

Tamar's disguise, the encounter, the pledge tokens, the pregnancy, and Judah's stunning declaration: "She is more righteous than I." The pivot point of the entire biblical story.

Matthew 1:1–6

Tamar is named in the genealogy of Jesus — one of only five women in a list of dozens of men. Her inclusion is a theological statement about legacy, redemption, and whose story God chooses to honor.

Luke 18:1–8

The Parable of the Persistent Widow: a woman who refuses to accept injustice and keeps pressing until she receives what is right. A mirror for Tamar's entire journey.

How You Will Benefit

Session Three brings the entire arc of the series to its culmination. It asks the hardest questions: Can there be genuine accountability without destruction? Can the person who wronged you ever truly reckon with what they did? And what happens to you — to your soul, your sense of self, your future — when you finally stop waiting and claim what is yours? This session offers a framework for moving from wound to wisdom, from bitterness to purpose, and from broken promises to a life built on unshakeable ground.

Applying the Lessons to Your Life

- Identify an area of your life where you are still waiting for an apology, an admission, or an acknowledgment that may never come. What would it look like to move forward without it — not by excusing the wrong, but by refusing to let the wound define your future?
- Reflect on the difference between revenge and justice. Tamar's plan is not simply about hurting Judah — it is about securing a future and establishing truth. How do you make that distinction in your own conflicts?
- Consider your own legacy. What do you want to be remembered for? What "genealogy" — of character, faith, and values — are you passing on to those who come after you?

Self-Worth Reflection

"You are not your wounds. You are not the sum of what was done to you. You are the courage it took to keep going anyway."

The most extraordinary thing about Tamar's story — in both the Bible and the novel — is not the dramatic confrontation. It is the fact that she is remembered. She is named. She is honored. In Matthew 1, in the very lineage of Jesus Christ, the name Tamar appears. God did not erase her. God did not skip over her complicated story. God included her. That is a statement about your story too. Whatever has been done to you, whatever promises have been broken over your life, whatever seasons of waiting and grief and silent injustice you have endured — you are not forgotten. You are not a footnote. You are named. And your story is not finished.

Discussion Questions

1

In Genesis 38, Judah declares: “She is more righteous than I.” Does Judah reach a similar moment of accountability in the novel? What brings him there — and if he does not fully arrive, what does that absence mean for the story’s resolution?

2

Tamar’s honey trap plan involves deception to conceive a child and secure her future — just as the biblical Tamar used a veil at the roadside. How do you morally evaluate her choice? Does the injustice done to her justify the means she uses?

3

Rachel Jacobson is the moral heartbeat of the Jacobson family — a woman of faith, grace, and quiet community influence. Her death removes the last restraining voice. What do we lose, in families and communities, when women like Rachel are silenced — by death, dismissal, or simply not being heard?

4

Tamar is named in Matthew 1 as an ancestor of Jesus — a radical act of divine inclusion. What does it say about God's view of women who have been wronged and forced to fight for what is theirs? How does knowing this shape how you read Broken Promises as a whole?

5

Looking across all three weeks: What is the “broken promise” of the title? Is it Judah’s promise about Shelah? The promise of love in an arranged marriage? The promise of justice in a society built on inequality? Or something else entirely?

A Final Word

The Bible has always been a living document. It has never been a relic sealed behind stained glass. It breathes. It walks the streets. It sits in courtrooms and boardrooms and hospital waiting rooms. It shows up in the grief of a widow and the courage of a woman who refused to disappear.

Andy C. Lewter wrote *Broken Promises* because he believed that the story of Tamar deserved to be heard by people who might never walk through a church door — and heard again, freshly, by those who have. After fifty years of ministry, he brought everything he knows about human nature, faith, and the relentless grace of God to this story.

We hope these three weeks have opened something in you. A question. A conversation. A memory. A courage you did not know you still had.

"Bring your book. Bring a friend. Be part of the conversation. Three weeks. Thirty minutes a week. A lifetime of impact."

Get Your Copy of Broken Promises

Support the author and bring this powerful story to your group. Paperback copies are available at:

<https://andylewter.com/broken-promises>

All are welcome. No prior Bible knowledge required. Just come as you are.

Broken Promises Book Club Study Guide

Based on the novel by Andy C. Lewter • New Life Publishing • 2024