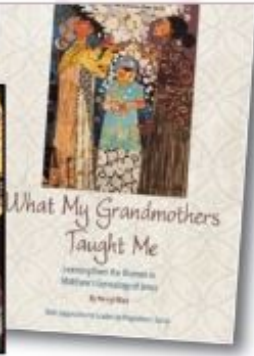


Sweet Sadie

BY MELVA LOWRY

For use with Lesson Two of the 2021–2022 PW/Horizons Bible study, *What My Grandmothers Taught Me: Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus* by Merryl Blair



Scripture: Genesis 38

In Lesson One we reflected on the importance of how we see ourselves and how we introduce ourselves to others. We explored the value of delving into family narratives, understanding that every story is not easy to accept, but acknowledging that difficult stories give us perspective on our ancestors' hardships. Now as we consider the story of Tamar, we will continue our reflection of how our ancestors survived unexpected losses and difficulties. Tamar's plight gives us insight into how her resourcefulness led to the continuation of the family of David, which ultimately led to the birth of Jesus. In this Bible study we will take time to reflect on the ways our grandmothers were resourceful.

As I was thinking about how we could reflect on the story of Tamar, I thought about a song by The Spinners, a popular R&B group of the 1970s. I remember my dad loving The Spinners' song "Sadie" because it reminded him of his grandmother, Sadie. I do not remember my great-grandmother, but every time I hear this song, I feel like I know her. When I think about what so many black mothers had to do in the 60s and 70s to ensure their family would survive, I think of this song. The church and the community came together to raise the neighborhood kids, thereby creating a close-knit bond.

The first part of the lyrics (and a vocal introduction) is below, but I encourage you to listen to the whole song!

"Sadie" by The Spinners*

(Intro)

*In a world like today
It's a rare occasion to be able
To see young mothers like the ones
That were around when I grew up.*

*But they live on in memory
to quite a few of us,
and this song is dedicated
to those who cherish that memory*

(Verse 1)

Early one Sunday morning,
breakfast was on the table.
There was no time to eat.
She said to me, "Boy, hurry to Sunday school."

Filled with a load of glory,
we learned the holy story.
She'll always have her dreams
Despite the things this troubled world can bring.

(Chorus)

Oh, Sadie
Don't you know we love you, sweet Sadie?
Place no one above you.
Sweet Sadie, well, well, well (living in the past).
Sometimes it seems so funny,
but no money will turn your life around.

(Verse 2)

Sweeter than cotton candy,
Stronger than papa's old brandy.
Always that needed smile
Once in a while, she would break down and cry.

Sometimes she'd be so happy,
just being with us and daddy.
Standing the worst of times,
breaking the binds with just a simple song.

This song was written in the mid-1970s, but as you listen to a recording or read the lyrics, let it spark memories or bring to mind someone present in your life today. Now that you are more familiar with the song,

find a few different colored pens or pencils and some extra paper for jotting down notes.

Using your assortment of pens or pencils, choose a different color to complete each task:

1. List the names of your mom(s), grandmothers and other women who acted like a mother to you in your life. _____

2. Underline lines that spoke to you in the song.
3. Circle words that remind you of the characteristics the women you listed to answer question 1.
4. Verse 2 uses unique adjectives to describe Sadie. What are some adjectives you would use to describe your mothers and grandmothers?

In the Genesis 38 narrative, Tamar had to become resourceful. She also had to work to create an environment for her legacy to continue. Reread the story of Tamar. Take your extra paper and jot down a few notes from the story.

5. Identify characteristics that helped Tamar to be resourceful in the story. _____

6. If you were in Tamar's situation, how would you have responded? _____

7. In what ways do we see women like Tamar in society today? How does society respond to these women? _____

8. How could the community and the church respond and assist the Tamar(s) of our communities?

Tamar's story is an example of a difficult narrative within a family's history that turned out favorably over time.

9. What are some difficult moments in your family story or in your personal life that produced favorable outcomes? _____

10. What characteristics did you or your ancestors lean on during this difficult time? _____

11. What characteristics would you want to cultivate in anticipation of difficult situations in the future?

I do not know much about my great-grandmother Sadie, but I know she raised a family in the South during a time when lynching, segregation and inequality was "just how it was going to be." And yet, she had six children, numerous grandchildren and now generations too many to name here. Just like Tamar, my grandmother's faith and resourcefulness allowed her family legacy to survive to this day. She is loved and she is missed, and she is part of my genealogy.

Prayer

God of difficult times and uneasy family stories, thank you for the resourcefulness of our ancestors and for your faithfulness to see them through hardships. We give thanks for the character you birthed in them and the skills they developed and nurtured through the generations, all the way to us. Teach us to appreciate the tenacity born out of difficulty. Amen.

Notes

* "Sadie," written by Joseph B. Jefferson, Bruce Hawes and Charles Simmons, produced by Thom Bell; released on *New and Improved* (1975).

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