

May 10, 2015  
Mother's Day

### What My Mother Taught Me

My mother taught me RELIGION.

"You'd better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My mother taught me FORESIGHT.

"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM.

"Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"

My mother taught me about WEATHER.

"This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it."

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"There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."

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"When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

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"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you".

Mothers. We all had one at one time in our lives. Some of us were raised by our biological mothers, and some of us were not. Some of us had amazing mothers, and some of us... well, were not as lucky. Women. Some of you have joined the ranks of motherhood. Some just recently and some for many years now. Some of you women out here were lucky enough to have many children, some of you were lucky enough to have one. Then there is another category- those women, who for one reason or another did not have children. These tend to be the extra special women who are forgot about on days like today. These are the women to whom parenting knows no biology. To whom any child in need is a child to help, counsel, and instruct. These extra special women have been in your lives all your life. Today, when you thank your mothers for putting up with you... I mean raising you, be sure to thank all of your other... non-biological mothers, for raising you as well.

Today is Mother's Day. A day set aside to highlight women and mothers... don't worry men, you get your chance next month. So today I wanted to take some time to look at mothers in the Bible... the good, the bad, and the ugly.

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So who's up next? A close second to mother of the Bible award goes to Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel. Hannah is one of the most poignant characters in the Old Testament. Like several other women in the Bible, she was unable to have children. People in ancient Israel believed that a large family was a blessing from God. Infertility, therefore, was a source of humiliation and shame. To make matters worse, her husband's other wife not only bore children but taunted Hannah mercilessly.

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Then you have Herodias, wife of Herod Antipas and mother of Salome. This little girl was possibly doomed from the beginning. Before she was born, her grandfather Herod the Great killed her grandmother, in a fit of jealous rage. Then he killed her father, his own son. Her first husband, and the father of her daughter Salome, was her uncle Philip, also a son of Herod the Great. She divorced him and then married Philip's half brother Herod Antipas (who was also her uncle). Soon after she and Antipas were married, John the Baptist began to criticize her for marrying her former husband's brother.

The political situation in 1st century Palestine was delicate, and Antipas and Herodias simply could not afford to have a trouble-maker roaming around the country criticizing the royal family. They knew they had to act - but they could not do so openly.

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She went to her mother for advice: what should she demand? Herodias seized the opportunity and told her to ask for John's head. Salome went back to the banquet hall and made her request. Antipas immediately granted it and John was beheaded.

Who teaches their child that a solution to life is to kill someone? Now that's a life lesson!

Now if that's not bad enough, let's look at some of those women who belong in the... glad she's not my mother list. I will start with Lot's wife.

Lot's wife is unnamed, but her story is significant. Her husband Lot was the nephew of Abraham, and her whole family travelled with Abraham in the long years of wandering as they looked for pasture for their flocks. Eventually they came to Canaan, and Lot's family and Abraham's parted company. Lot settled with his family in the notorious city of Sodom, already well known as a center immorality.

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After the catastrophe, Lot and his two daughters fled up into the hills, where they could be safe. They believed that all other people in the world had been destroyed. The two young men who had been their promised husbands were dead, and the young women saw no hope of ever having children of their own.

They decided to use trickery to get themselves pregnant, and sure enough, both girls became pregnant by Lot and eventually each bore a son. Mother and daughters- what a lot! A Mother who longed to go back to the evil immoral city and her daughters who were raised in it.

I will wrap up the... glad she's not my mother section with who I consider to be the worst mother in the Bible. And that shiny award goes to... Athaliah.

Athaliah had an impeccable royal lineage herself. Then she married the crown prince of Judah, Jehoram, who ruled as king of Judah for eight years before he died. Jehoram was succeeded by Athaliah's twenty-two year old son Ahaziah, and her position immediately became much more powerful. The top woman in a kingdom was not the king's wife - wives went in and out of favor. It was the Queen Mother, who acted as counsellor to her son and was often the only person he could trust. Unfortunately for Athaliah, her son reigned for only one year before he was murdered by Jehu.

Now the story gets a bit muddy. According to the Bible, Athaliah set out to destroy all of her own family, seizing power for herself. She murdered her entire family, and only one royal princeling, Jehoash, was saved from the massacre.

During this time Athaliah was the ruler of Judah - the only female monarch Judah or Israel ever had. But at the end of that six years there was another palace coup. Athaliah died in the coup and the seven-year old Jehoash became king.

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Now let's look at some of those women who belong in the... ehh, not the best mother award nominee. In this category, I chose Rebekah, mother of Jacob and Esau.

For every mother who has ever had the temptation to play favorites with her children, pay attention to Rebekah. She didn't just play favorites, she schemed and connived and was an accessory to one of the biggest trickeries in all of history. It says it plain in scripture that

Rebekah's husband Isaac loved Esau because he was an outdoors-man but Rebekah loved Jacob. When the boys grew up, Jacob tricked his older brother into selling his birthright for a bowl of stew. Later, as Isaac was dying and his eyesight had failed, Rebekah helped Jacob deceive Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau. Rebekah was assertive in a time when women were expected to be submissive. This quality helped her become Isaac's wife but caused trouble when she pushed one of her sons ahead of the other. This kind of favoritism does not bode well for a family. Rebekah's deception caused strife between Esau and Jacob. Rebekah reminds us that it is a dangerous thing to use maternal power for manipulation.

Then you have Herodias, wife of Herod Antipas and mother of Salome. This little girl was possibly doomed from the beginning. Before she was born, her grandfather Herod the Great killed her grandmother, in a fit of jealous rage. Then he killed her father, his own son. Her first husband, and the father of her daughter Salome, was her uncle Philip, also a son of Herod the Great. She divorced him and then married Philip's half brother Herod Antipas (who was also her uncle). Soon after she and Antipas were married, John the Baptist began to criticize her for marrying her former husband's brother.

The political situation in 1st century Palestine was delicate, and Antipas and Herodias simply could not afford to have a trouble-maker roaming around the country criticizing the royal family. They knew they had to act - but they could not do so openly.

It is hard to know how much of what happened was pre-arranged, but at Antipas' birthday dinner the young Salome danced, and pleased her step-father mightily. So, Antipas promised her anything that she asked for.

She went to her mother for advice: what should she demand? Herodias seized the opportunity and told her to ask for John's head. Salome went back to the banquet hall and made her request. Antipas immediately granted it and John was beheaded.

Who teaches their child that a solution to life is to kill someone? Now that's a life lesson!

Now if that's not bad enough, let's look at some of those women who belong in the... glad she's not my mother list. I will start with Lot's wife.

Lot's wife is unnamed, but her story is significant. Her husband Lot was the nephew of Abraham, and her whole family travelled with Abraham in the long years of wandering as they looked for pasture for their flocks. Eventually they came to Canaan, and Lot's family and Abraham's parted company. Lot settled with his family in the notorious city of Sodom, already well known as a center immorality.

God eventually lost patience with the city and sent two men/angels to destroy it. Lot warned his family - his wife, two daughters and the two young men who were to marry his daughters.

The little group fled, and as they hurried away Sulphur and fire began to rain from the sky. The cities behind them were consumed in a terrible disaster. It became too much for Lot's wife, as she longed to return to her old life. She turned her body and looked back - and died instantly, as her body turned into a pillar of salt.

After the catastrophe, Lot and his two daughters fled up into the hills, where they could be safe. They believed that all other people in the world had been destroyed. The two young men who had been their promised husbands were dead, and the young women saw no hope of ever having children of their own.

They decided to use trickery to get themselves pregnant, and sure enough, both girls became pregnant by Lot and eventually each bore a son. Mother and daughters- what a lot! A Mother who longed to go back to the evil immoral city and her daughters who were raised in it.

I will wrap up the... glad she's not my mother section with who I consider to be the worst mother in the Bible. And that shiny award goes to... Athaliah.

Athaliah had an impeccable royal lineage herself. Then she married the crown prince of Judah, Jehoram, who ruled as king of Judah for eight years before he died. Jehoram was succeeded by Athaliah's twenty-two year old son Ahaziah, and her position immediately became much more powerful. The top woman in a kingdom was not the king's wife - wives went in and out of favor. It was the Queen Mother, who acted as counsellor to her son and was often the only person he could trust. Unfortunately for Athaliah, her son reigned for only one year before he was murdered by Jehu.

Now the story gets a bit muddy. According to the Bible, Athaliah set out to destroy all of her own family, seizing power for herself. She murdered her entire family, and only one royal princeling, Jehoash, was saved from the massacre.

During this time Athaliah was the ruler of Judah - the only female monarch Judah or Israel ever had. But at the end of that six years there was another palace coup. Athaliah died in the coup and the seven-year old Jehoash became king.

Out of all the mothers in the Bible, Athaliah, who murdered her entire family to become queen, takes the prize.

So there you have it. The good, the bad, and the ugly mothers of the Bible. How does it make you feel about your own mother? What does it teach you about being a mother?