

WOMEN SERIES
THE FOUR WOMEN IN THE
GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Turn with me to the gospel of Matthew chapter one. Ladies and mothers have a special place in God's heart. There are different aspects of mother's life that I really admire. Besides, they have special characteristics as a woman. Some say that in a family relationship, if the man is the head of the home, then the woman is the neck. I am not sure whether that is a compliment or not. They put the woman as a neck that turns the head. One of the qualities in ladies is their ability to turn the necks of many men, to the chagrin of their wives sitting next to them.

If you read in the bible, women look into the details more than the men. Who was it that talked about bringing perfume to Jesus? It was a woman. Who was it that talked about His daily needs? I mean, who washes His clothes? Who takes care of His food etc? The men have to be told what to do - to go and buy lunch in John chapter 4. However, the ladies automatically know what to do. Luke chapter 8 says that the women took care and ministered to Him. The women were the first to come to His tomb. They did not really come to the tomb believing that He was going to be raised from the dead. Nobody believed that He was going to be raised from the dead even though He told them so. They came to the tomb wanting to anoint Him. For the men I do not know what they were doing. They were hiding in a room for fear of the Jews. However, the women overcame that fear in order to take care of details like anointing or putting more perfume on the Lord Jesus whom they loved. It so happened that when they came on the third day Jesus had risen from the dead.

They were surprised the tomb was empty. That proves that they did not believe in the resurrection too.

Women also have an ability to hold on. I studied history to look at some of God's truth and principles working in the life of humankind. In the great depression of 1930s and in many hard times in the Chicago fire, many businessmen committed suicide. They just gave up on life and they committed suicide. Some years ago, a slew of political leaders committed suicide in Europe. Have you notice their wives are still around? The women stayed on. Women may attempt to commit suicide when they are depressed but comparatively fewer of them do so. Somehow or other they gather the strength to overcome the temptation and depression. Even in the state of depression, they hold on to life. When a man gives up, he gives up. You find women are the ones that have a greater "stickability." When they hold on, they really hold on.

Women have a great tenacity to hold on to life and things dear to them. When a woman wants something, they do not let go. Have you discovered how determined a woman can be? You tell them off twenty times they are still at it. As for the men, sometimes you tell them off once and you would never see them again. Even the bible illustrate about the persistent widow. She was persistent. The judge said no. She replied yes. No, yes, no, yes. Sometimes men fall in love and they found that the girl does not love them. The men give up and go to another one. However, when a girl falls in love and finds that he does not really love her she says, "It can't be," even when told that the person already has a steady girlfriend. "No," she says, "they will break up and he will come back to me." I mean they really hold on. Women have a greater tenacity towards persons, values, and things they hold dear in their lives.

There was a case where some criminals have robbed the Bank of England, set fire to twenty other banks, and murdered fifty other people. As the criminals stood in court to hear the verdict being pronounced on them, a mother was heard crying and saying, "That is my baby." The mother can remember that little baby that she gave birth to. The whole nation sees the hardened criminal in that man but his mother sees the innocent baby in him.

You may have offended a woman and she has said, "I do not want to see you again." However, if you really came and see her again in a nice way, she will still see you. However, when a man says, "I do not want to see you again," he does not really want to see you again. Therefore, if the woman is having a bad time with her husband and she says, "I do not want to talk to you again," what they mean is, "Please talk to me more and try to understand what I am going through." It is different. Men and women use different dictionaries.

In Matthew 1, we read the genealogy of Jesus. I want to point to the fact that of all the thousands of women in the genealogy of Jesus, only four women were mentioned. I think that is something special. It is because of four different qualities that I would like to focus on, especially looking at women and mothers who have been so persevering in the affairs of life. We wondered why only these four women are mentioned. Many women were involved in the begetting but these four must have been outstanding and very special to be given mention.

Matthew 1: 3 *Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez and begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.* Therefore, the first lady mentioned is Tamar who fathered Perez through Judah. There is a whole story in itself. The first lady is called Tamar.

The second woman mentioned in verse 5 *Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab.* Rahab is the second woman mentioned.

Third woman in verse 5 *Boaz begot Obed by Ruth.* The third woman is called Ruth. If you study the genealogy, we realize that even king David was not a hundred percent pure Abraham's descendant. He has mixed blood. Ruth was a Moabite. Rahab was a Canaanite and the same with Tamar. Even in the bible days, it was not by flesh and blood. It was by the promise of God and the descendants were based on the promise.

The fourth woman is in verse 16 *Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

So these four women are given mention in Jesus' genealogy. We want to point to four little principles to encourage mothers. These qualities belong to women and if not for those qualities men will not be where they are today. We speak on the strength of these four women so that women may harness their strength and quality and take encouragement from these four women.

Tamar

Let us look at the first story Tamar. Her story is found in Genesis 38. If not for Genesis 38 you would not have even heard about her or about who she was or what kind of woman she was. She has what I would call the ways of a woman. She has the ability to overcome many harsh conditions by her ladylike qualities and pursue her objectives successfully. The first two women are a story of faith and love overcoming hardship. Some of us will look at Genesis 38 and think that Tamar was not a good woman. She was not bad; the circumstances that she was going through made her resort to unusual ways normally unacceptable to society.

The story begins in verse 1 *It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adulamite whose name was Hirah. Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her. So, she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. She conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him. Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. However, Er, Judah's firstborn was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him.*

I want you to picture what Tamar went through. Tamar had a very hard life. In those days, the women did not have much choice in their marriage. They were married away. The men negotiated among themselves and got their sons and

daughters married off. They were under the Old Testament custom. Here a sweet young innocent girl Tamar was married to a crook. Er was a crook, a wicked man, a mobster, and a gangster. Although the bible says in one verse that he died, he did not die the second day of his marriage. They must have lived for some time. Think about all the torture that he put her through. Most probably, Er was also a wife beater. Being a cruel man, he would have beaten her up many times until she was blue and black. Maybe by the Lord's mercy, maybe He saw what Tamar was going through, He removed Er and he died. At the same time for Tamar, it was a loss. Then according to the custom of those days, when the elder brother dies, the next brother in line must marry the widow and have descendants on behalf of his brother. The next in line was Onan.

Onan may not have been a mobster like Er but he was also not a very good man either. Imagine to marry once to a wicked man who died and become a widow is bad enough. Now she was remarried to Onan who was also wicked who simply refused to impregnate her in obedience to God's commandment for the lineage to continue. Think about the suffering that Tamar went through. In the end after some time of abuse Onan also died.

Judah, the father of Er and Onan, had only one son left and was afraid that the third son would die if he takes over his brothers' widow. He did not see the fact that it was not because of Tamar. It was because of the wickedness of Er and Onan that they died for their own sin. Therefore, he gave a very strong command to Tamar. He says in verse 11 *Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law. "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown."* Tamar could have gone back to her Canaanite life, got married, and lived a very happy life. However, since she had come to join the Jewish lineage of Abraham's descendant, Judah was not about to let her go and at the same time, he would not let her marry his third son. He says, "Remain a widow until my son grows up." However, actually in his heart he was not going to let him marry her. He expected her to grow old and die.

Think about her life. She has been robbed when she was young, married to a gangster, then to the brother of the gangster and now told to wait. She cannot continue her life. Not only that she does not have any children. In those days, children were the pride and prize of women. Having children made women

recognized and honored in society.

In verse 12 *Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died, and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, to shear his sheep.* Now try to understand the predicament. She does not have a child. She was told to wait and Judah did not keep his words. Her desire to continuing the lineage was so strong that she took a very unusual step. It may not be the right method. However, do not look at that. Look at her life and see what was going on. I do not know how she did it. However, she dressed up in such a way that Judah did not recognize her. Isn't that amazing? I mean he even slept with her and did not recognize her. In fact, it is true that women are better at recognizing faces than men. Finally, he heard news that Tamar was expecting a child in verse 24. Judah in verse 24 wanted to kill her. As if the woman has not suffered enough. What was her due was not given to her. In the end verse 26 *So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son. He never knew her again.*

That is the first quality of women. They have a tremendous way of seeking to do what is right in the way that they feel is right. Now some of it may not come out exactly correct looking from the New Testament's point of view. Two wrongs do not make one right. However, Judah acknowledged she was more righteous than him.

She is not the first woman who had such a crafty ability. There are other women married to wicked men too. Remember the other man whom David nearly killed. That is in the book of I Samuel 25. When David was in the wilderness there was a very sweet woman named Abigail married to a wicked man. Nabal would not help David. Nabal refused to help David. In fact, he passed a bad remark about David. However, Abigail was a good woman and she reasoned within herself. In verse 14, one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife. In verse 18, she made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread to David and his men. Then verse 19 She did not tell her husband. Why didn't she tell her husband? If she tells her wicked husband, he would say no and David would have slaughtered everybody. However, Abigail knew that the only way she could save lives was to go against her husband's wishes and quickly run ahead with some gifts and provisions for David and his men. She went and she won David over by her wisdom and persuasion. She had a

way of doing it. She is a woman who knows what is right.

Let me explain again. We obey laws and ethics but the highest law that we obey is the Word of God. After that is the law of the conscience. Even if your marriage partner tells you to do some wrong thing that is against your conscience, you have to obey your conscience. Abigail knew what was right. Somehow, Tamar knew what was due to her. Imagine if Tamar did not succeed, there would have been no lineage down to the line of Jesus. However, that desire so consumed her that she had the ability to think up some unusual way to get what she was entitled to. Some of us think she is a wicked woman dressed up as a harlot. She does not like doing those things. Which woman will dress herself as a prostitute? She does not like to do these things. However, the men in her life dealt treacherously and unrighteously with her. All the men that came into her life were less righteous than her, even her father-in-law, Judah. Circumstances were against her. It looks like if she had died everybody would be happy.

Even though she cannot achieve much in life, there is one thing she could do. She could bring out one child in God. At least give me a child in God that I could say my life is worth living. If we lived and died and we have not poured our life into some other people's lives, we have lived and died selfishly. If all we did is to live and seek for food, clothing and shelter, we would have lived and died selfishly. Sometimes your life can bless millions, sometimes your life can bless ten, and sometimes your life can bless only one. However, if you have lived, died, and given your life even to one, it would have been worth it. She brought up one child. It was her only hope. It was the joy of her heart. Even though it all happened in imperfect circumstances, yet in the end what was due to her was given to her. Sometimes when I read the story I asked, "Could she not have done it another way?" She could have asked Judah. She may have even asked Judah a few times or sent signals or told different people. However, she may have received one excuse after another. She still need one child. That is the strength of a woman. Women have the ability to flow with something on their inside that drives them to a higher purpose.

The method may look wrong. However, some higher force bigger than them was driving them. Sarah missed it once when she told Abraham to go into Hagar to get

a child. However, there was another time when she did not miss it in the book of Genesis 21:10 *Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.* Abraham was very unhappy in verse 11 but God said, “Go ahead and do what Sarah tells you to do.” Sometimes inside a mother, inside a woman, lies that deep moving of a conscience to fulfill the higher purposes of God. Many have gone through difficult circumstances but they have obeyed their conscience to fulfill what they knew was right.

It is admirable to see the way some women pay the price to walk uprightly. They maneuver through difficult circumstances to maintain their integrity and righteousness. Great sacrifices were involved in that maneuver. Some even do so to the degrading themselves in many ways. Yet, they will do it to fulfill what was in their conscience. You have read stories of how sometimes an army tank is marching across a road into a city. It is sometimes a mother’s tears or the mother lying herself before the tank that stopped the tank. Sometimes you hear about a young person who does it. However, have you noticed the zeal of young people and a mother’s compassion and desire can drive them to do heroic things?

We can find that quality in Tamar. Even though she had suffered much, even though she had gone through much, even though by doing what she did would ruin her reputation, yet she is saying the show must go on. She must have that seed. She must have that descendant. That lineage must be fulfilled otherwise she feel unfulfilled. I am amazed at the extent of cruelty of the sacrifice that a mother will go through in order to give her life for somebody else. Tamar even suffered having a bad name in order to have that seed. She did it because that was the only way she could have that seed to leave a legacy to the family.

Rahab

The second woman we read about is in the book of Joshua, Rahab. This is a different woman. In the book of Joshua, Rahab symbolize a woman’s ability to camouflage. Rahab did not have a good past. Neither did she have a good life. In fact, she was a harlot. Let me tell you there are many harlots out there today and

they are not there because they like it. They are there because of poverty, broken life, forced into that kind of life. Some of us have been in hard situations and we wondered how to come out of that. Rahab may have done many wrong things. She may have been a sinner. Thousand of things were wrong in her life. However, there was one thing she did right and only one.

You know sometimes the devil has deceived us. There are a lot of things that are right about your life but when one thing goes wrong in your life, the devil pounce on you and say, "Finish, finish, everything is finished. You are going to lose everything." The devil is a liar. The blessing is more powerful than the curse. The release of the force of righteousness is greater than the force of sin. Let me encourage you. You have done a thousand things right in your life but maybe you just have one or two failures in your life and the devil keeps haunting you and saying, "Finished. Everything is gone. You have destroyed your life." Let me tell you – reject that statement and cast down that thought. I reject the statement that people say that it takes one tiny little mistake to destroy everything you built in a lifetime. I did not believe that. That is not in the bible. It is not in the Word of God because I know the grace of God.

The opposite is true. When you built something over a life time its very hard to destroy it. It is a lie of the enemy. It is not as easy to destroy good with evil, as it is to destroy evil with good. For Rahab, she may have done a thousand things wrong. However, one day she did one thing right. She hid the men who were being pursued.

She said to them in verse 9, She to the men: " I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. As soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg of you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters and all that they have, and deliver

our lives from death."

She did one thing right. The one act that she did right undid all the thousand things she did wrong. It does not matter if you failed. I know as Christians some of us do fail. If you ever failed remember these words: the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he falls though he falls, yet he will not be cast down. You know what you should do. Get up or kneel down, ask God for forgiveness, cleanse yourself by the blood and get on with it. That one failure will not destroy your entire life. It is a lie of the devil. That one tiny failure in your home, in your work or in your ministry is not going to destroy the ten, twenty, thirty years that you have walked with God. What about the many hours you have cried before God? What about the time that you have wept and prayed through? What about the many times you have fasted? Do you think God has forgotten that?

So in the story of Rahab, remember when you fall, pick yourself up, dust yourself and cleanse yourself through the blood of Jesus, and get on with your life. If you get on and do something right the memories of what is right will wipe off all the wrong memories. It takes one right act to cancel out a thousand or a million things you did wrong. Now it is nothing to do with exchange. It has to do with the power of righteousness and the power of doing right. A lot of people have failed in their lives in the bible but they picked themselves up and they have gone on to greater achievement.

Ruth

The third woman is Ruth. I think Ruth is one of the most sorrowful stories you ever read about. There was this man who has gone into Canaan with his two sons Mahlon and Chilion. They married Canaanite women and one of them was Ruth. The man's name is Elimelech. In the end Elimelech died, Mahlon died and Chilion died. They only left the mother and the two daughters-in-law. Chapter one of Ruth is such a sad story. Yet, in that sadness Ruth is like a rope. Many people would rather end their lives in that kind of misfortune. Some people commit suicide, some die of sorrow. Naomi was now going to go back home to Israel. She told her two

daughters-in-law to go back to their hometowns. In such a sad beginning in verse 14 *Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.* Orpah left but Ruth was a clinger. In verse 15 Naomi said, *"Look your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."* However, Ruth said: *"Entreat me not to leave you. Or to turn back from following after you: For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge. And your people shall be my people. And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also if anything but death parts you and me."*

She is like a rope. She held on tenaciously. I want to encourage you that in your saddest moment remember the rope. There was no promise of any hope. There was no promise of a future in chapter one. However, when Ruth held on she says that even if she dies she will die holding on to Naomi, her people and to Yahweh God. This sad story turned into one of the happiest endings you ever see in the bible. In Ruth chapter four, Ruth found a husband. Naomi has a grand child. Boaz found a good wife and David was born of such admirable ancestor.

In Tamar, we see the ability to overcome difficulty through creativity. There are no limits to the creativity. Now there is a difference in the New Testament. Creativity is limited within the boundaries of the Word of God. Whatever you do, whatever you desire let your creativity flow. The women in the bible were so creative. They will go to great ends to fulfill what they know their conscience was speaking to them. In your difficulty, let your motherly creativity comes forth.

In your falls, sins, and temptations, in the time when you sink the lowest do not forget the story of Rahab. Pick yourself up and have the covering. Just cover yourself with the blood and get on with life. Do not forget that covering of the blood of Jesus when you are down in your sin.

In our sorrows and depression, let us be realistic - in life there are tears. There is laughter thank God and there are tears. There are happy moments and there are difficult moments. Sometimes there are sad moments too. When people are sad and depressed, they are most tempted to do the wrong thing. However, look at Ruth.

When sorrow is upon sorrow, tears upon tears, she became like a rope. She held on until the happy ending comes. Remember Jesus has thrown you the rope. In Jesus, there is only a happy ending. There is no sad ending for anyone of our lives. If you are having a sad moment, it is because your story has only just begun. Be like the string and tie yourself to Jesus. Where you lead me, I will go. Though there looks like there is no future, nevertheless you know the One who holds the future. You know the heartache when you pastor people. Families broken, wives abused, homes that are shattered. What about food? What about clothing? What about shelter? What about the future? What about what people will say? Remember Ruth and the rope. In your sorrow, remember the rope.

Mary

The last story is Mary. I believe the strongest words that Mary spoke in her life are found in the gospel of Luke 1: 38 *Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.* Mary is a symbol of purity and virginity. How she offered herself to God is that purity of the way she had lived her life, the way she had walked with Jesus. Throughout her entire life, you seldom hear of Joseph. However, you read about Mary a few more times. You read about Mary when Jesus was coming onto this earth. You read about Mary when everyone was criticizing Jesus. Everyone thought that He had gone mad. Mary came with the brothers to see Him. She was practically told off by Jesus saying that His true mother and brothers are those who do the will of His Father in heaven. However, she held on. When Jesus was carrying the cross up to Golgotha, Mary was there. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, Mary was there. All her life she held on to the purity of her character. When Jesus was ascended on high and told His disciples to wait in the Upper Room, Mary was there. In Mary, we find the purity of her spirituality.

That is the fourth strength of these women we see in the genealogy of Jesus life. How that purity is found in spirituality.

For mothers today we want to honor you for what you have been through. I am amazed today how many mothers have brought up their children with their very

limited budget. I know of one widow who raised her nine children on just one dollar a day for many years before the elder children found work to provide for the family. Many mothers have to fend for themselves and for their children in spite of becoming single again. How much you have sacrificed to bring up your children. I am amazed at your creativity. I want to encourage you to continue in that creativity in your difficulty, even if you are going to have a few more hard moments and difficulty in your road ahead. If God had given you that creativity up to this day as a mother, He will continue to give it to you in time to come.

I admire mothers in how you cover your children with tears of prayer and intercession when they are in danger or when they are going astray. At a time when many criminals and many bad sons and bad daughters are rejected by society, rejected by the police, rejected by everyone but there will always be someone who doesn't reject them, mama. I admire you for the way you can accept your children even when they have committed some misdeeds. Love covers a multitude of sins. No matter how everyone sees the most evil thing in your children, yet your mama's heart can see one good thing that nobody else can see. So, in the mud and filth of sin remember the covering. Jesus is the covering. Remember this: a thousand good is not overcome by one evil. However, a thousand evils are overcome by one good. Even though your life may be surrounded by evil and you have really fallen like the prodigal son, remember a thousand evils can be overcome by one good deed. Remember that covering. Mothers have a lot of sacrifices, a lot of tears, a lot of heartache in bringing your sons and daughters up. Sometimes no one understands your heartache. Remember this: no story ever ends in the bible with tears. The story ends with our tears being wiped away. I encourage you do not give up. Hold on to the string of Jesus and God will make sure you have a happy ending in your lifetime.

Finally, all of us desire purity in our life. Purity is not in the flesh. Purity begins like the handkerchief that a woman hides in her bosom. Purity begins in your heart, in your spirit. To be pure and a virgin in God is to be spiritual. There is no beauty like the beauty of holiness. Go after spirituality and the purity will follow along.

