

WOMEN

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1. FIVE GREAT BIBLE WOMEN

This morning we have a special message for women and mothers. From time to time, we hear heartwarming stories of mothers who make heroic sacrifices to save their loved ones. Many years ago in a Mexican earthquake where thousands of people were killed, there was a mother buried under the rubbles with her child. The mother was immobilized but still alive. She could still move slightly. Her little child of about one or two years old was protected and could move. While the rescuers were still clearing the debris to find survivors, the child was crying for water. There was no water around. The mother bit her own hand until her blood flowed out and let the child suck the blood. By the time rescuers reached the child and the mother, the mother had already died but the child survived. This kind of natural love is present even in many mothers today.

In the bible, we see women who have reached high points in God. We know in Galatians 3:28 that God said there is neither male nor female in His sight. But there are certain characteristics that cause a woman to rise and soar to great heights. We want to consider some of these great women in the bible. We look at five great women in the bible and the virtues they espoused. Of course, we are not saying that that was the only virtue each one espoused. But that particular virtue is the prominent point that brings each one to rise head and shoulder above many people. Sometimes even nations have been changed and moved because of some of these great women.

These five women are not the only great women in the Bible but we are just picking out these five. Many women in the bible have risen to great heights because of certain virtues they hold strongly in their lives.

Deborah

First of all we look in the book of Judges and we want to see why some women rise head and shoulder above many other men and women.

Judges 4:1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel. Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth ...

Notice that Deborah, a prophetess, was the wife of somebody. A woman called to be a prophet or apostle or evangelist or a pastor or teacher need not be single. Some Christian groups do not recognize the ministry of women. I think they should read Gal. 3:28 all over again. I believe that God can anoint either a man or a woman for the ministry. Some other groups think that when God anoints a woman for a ministry, she must remain single all her life. They reason that if God anoints a woman and does not anoint her husband, then she will hog the limelight while her husband plays second fiddle and is hidden in the shadows. But that's not necessarily true. Deborah was married but she was still successful.

In verse 4, Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim.

Ladies can be very creative. Deborah set up her ministry under a palm tree. Even Elijah and Elisha did not operate that way. Deborah's office was under the palm tree. Sometimes, women can come up with pragmatic and creative ideas. You can tell whether a particular office is occupied by a woman or by a man. Sometimes an office does not look the way it should be. You put a woman there and suddenly the office has a homely atmosphere. Every time you find when a place is done up nicely you ask around there are always women involved. They have that special touch to do up a place nicely.

In verse 6, Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor, take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun: and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon and I will deliver him into your hand.

Barak was one of the mighty men in Israel in those days. Deborah who was a prophetess called Barak and said, "Go out. God told you to go out and conquer." Look at Barak's reply in verse 8 If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go. Now that is a smart reply.

If somebody prophesizes that you are to go and evangelize the Eskimos in the Artic Circle, tell him or her, "If you go with me, I will go to the Artic Circle as you prophesized." Bring that prophet along so that when you reached there and saw nothing but seals and penguins, you can turn around and ask, "Well, prophet, what's next?"

I remember reading the story of a would-be missionary who received a word of prophecy in his church that he was supposed to go to an island in the Caribbean to evangelize the people there. He was even given the name of the island. He looked it up in a map and sure enough, he found it. He became very excited and lost no time preparing to go there. He then raised up a missionary fund, told the church of his plans to be obedient to the prophecy, found a ship that was willing to take him there and finally was on the high seas with his wife and children to go to that island. On the way, the captain of the ship spoke to him about that island and finally asked him, "Anyway, why are you going there? There is no one living on that island." That missionary's jaws dropped. Some people are led on a spiritual wild goose chase because of some prophecies given in the flesh. Lives and years have been wasted because of some wrong prophecies dished out to undiscerning individuals.

That is quite a smart move of Barak. He said, "Well, since this is a prophecy, would you go with me too?" That is a test of whether the prophecy is true or not. Sometimes people prophesy but they do not want to be involved in that prophecy. It is just like someone prophesying to you, "Go ahead and walk through that valley because God will be with you." You reply, "Since you prophesy that I would be delivered, would you like to accompany me?" "No, no way." "But I thought you say that I will be saved?"

Barak was requesting help from Deborah. Finally, all of Israel depended on Deborah to give the encouragement although Deborah was not a woman of war. She did not lift up a sword. She did not fight in the army. Yet, she was there in the background as a kind of spiritual leader during those dark days of Israel.

What is her high point? Her high point is that she excelled in the anointing of God on her life. That set her apart. She espoused that virtue. Women, when God has called you and anointed you, you do not have to push your way around. You do not have to try to promote yourself by fleshly means. When God anoints you, let the anointing and the gift make room for you. Whether you are a man or a woman, when you are anointed your gift makes room for you. Of course, sometimes an anointed woman has twice the battle to face because of the prejudice of people. Yet, the principle remains the same - the anointing and the gift will establish your life. As for Deborah, she gave her entire life to fulfill that anointing upon her life. God promoted her until the anointing was recognized in her life. That's one of her virtues.

Ruth

Ruth is another great woman of God. What qualities can we find in Ruth that brought her to greatness? Ruth was no prophet. Ruth was not especially noted for the gift of the Holy Spirit like Deborah. But there is something about Ruth that stands out in her life.

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge. 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 nothing but death parts you and me."

Ruth shows a marvelous quality of the ability to yield. In modern terms, we call it submission. Yes, it is true that due to her ability to submit, yield, and flow with the flow, she rises to greatness. Ruth had a servant's heart. Not everybody who rises to greatness need to be the kind of outspoken, domineering, highly talented, highly gifted, personality. Ruth rose to greatness through her ability of learning to serve. Each step of the way in her promotion or greatness came as she served.

In chapter 2:2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor." When Ruth went out that day, she was only seeking to serve. She wanted to glean from the harvest, as was the custom of the poor people. They would go into the field that has already been harvested to pick up the left over grains lying all over the place. God commanded it to be left there for the poor. The poor would pick them up and use them for food. Ruth's intention was not looking for a husband. Her intention was to serve. In her serving and lowering herself, it can be said that Ruth can do other things beside that. As a widow and a foreigner, she could abandon her in-laws and return to her homeland. But Ruth was not the type to take her mother-in-law as a burden.

Some adults consider their aged parents as a burden. Now I understand that there are different circumstances. Some old folks may have an attitude problem. Sometimes, allowing your parents into your homes may cause tension in your family. However, there could be other arrangements like financial support and taking care of them in

some other ways. I am surprised with young people who only think of their own careers, pursuits, interests, and find their parents a burden. They feel that they should take care of themselves first and have enough problems of their own, let alone take care of another burden, even if it were their own parents. That is the most selfish attitude you could ever have. On the other hand, some parents raise their children to pursue worldly and materialistic goals without giving due attention to nurturing godly faith, wisdom, love and wholesome relationships in their children. Having instilled a materialistic attitude and having suppressed the spiritual side of their children, it should come as no surprise that the grown up children now consider their aged parents an economic and family burden. The children have been taught to love and value money above all things. The parents have planted self-destructive seeds in their children, which only served to boomerang on them in their twilight years when they needed their children most.

But Ruth did not have that kind of selfish attitude towards her old mother-in-law. Ruth sought to serve. Her attitude of serving others must be well known for Boaz to make this statement of her. In verse 11 And Boaz answered and said to her, “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and have come to a people whom you did not know before. Look, she could have gone back to her father and her mother. But something within her rose up to have that compassion and love for Naomi. How can Naomi take care of herself? Naomi in fact in chapter one commanded Ruth and Orpah to leave her alone so that she could go back to Bethlehem in Israel all by herself. But Ruth could not do that. Ruth knew that Naomi was too old to take care of herself. There is no one to take care of Naomi if she went back to her homeland. How could she just leave Naomi in that manner? Ruth was willing to leave her own people. If she returned to her homeland, her own father and mother would probably receive her back into their home. She followed Naomi to a land not knowing the future. That was her fame.

Look at her fame. She was famous not for her prophecy. She was famous for taking care of her mother-in-law. In today’s society where there are constant conflicts between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, this is even more praiseworthy. Boaz said in verse 11, It has been fully reported to me. That was the first time she met Boaz. So there must have been words going around. “I have heard about you. I didn’t hear about your talents, I didn’t hear about your gifts. I didn’t hear about your prophecies. But I have heard that you took care of your mother-in-law and how you have sacrificed in order to follow her.” “I have heard,” Boaz said, “about you.” Ruth is famous for her ability to serve and submit. The road to greatness for some is in that manner. She served faithfully all those years.

In Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?” Ruth never even thought about herself. Naomi had to think for Ruth. She harvested a reciprocal care. And look at how obedient she was when her mother says in verse 3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go in uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.”

That is a long list of instructions. Ask her to bathe, ask her to put her garment, and ask her to wait till he lies down and all these other things. Not all women would have responded the way Ruth responded. In verse 5 she says All that you say to me I will do. Now that is the kind of character she had. She was a very submissive woman. She makes a good wife. All that you say to me I will do.

Sometimes a person has a problem submitting to others whether in an organization or in a marriage. Either the husband is abusive or the wife is domineering. There is a problem of submission. Usually that problem can be traced back to their relationships with their parents. Because they do not know how to relate to their own parents, they can not relate to one another. An unsubmitive wife may have a problem with her parents. We realize that some parents may be unreasonable and difficult but that does not mean you become rebellious. You realize that your parents may not be perfect but that does not mean that you have to be imperfect. The bible says, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In counseling, I have spoken to families that are having problems. Sometimes, the problem is on the husband's side and sometimes the problem is on the wife's side. But in those cases where there is a problem of the wife learning to yield and submit, the problem ties back to the wife's relationship with her own parents. The inability to relate properly to her husband starts from her relationship with her parents. When that streak of rebellion to authority manifest in a woman's behavior, she will not be able to say like Ruth, "All that you say to me I will do." Ruth was following the plain instructions to the t and putting herself at risk of great embarrassment. If the whole thing does not work out, if the whole thing fails, Naomi is not the one to get the embarrassment. Ruth is the one who is going to get the embarrassment. But her virtue is the ability to submit.

In verse 8 Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

Look, she takes a humble approach. "I am your maidservant, your servant." See her approach was in a submissive way. Do you know that submission can be powerful? Her submission influenced Boaz to do things that are beyond what Boaz would normally have done. Boaz said in verse 10 Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. Ruth's entire life was serving. She served her mother-in-law. Now she wants to serve her relationship with Boaz and he says in verse 11 And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. She was well known for her virtue, well known for her submission and all she had done for Naomi.

Verse 13 Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of close relative for you - good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the Lord lives! Lie down until morning. Ruth was putting her entire life at stake. Such was her submissive attitude. And of course, there arose greatness from that kind of relationship.

In Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel. And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him."

Ruth was no ordinary daughter-in-law. That one daughter-in-law is equivalent to ten sons. Ruth's virtue stood up. She already was famous even before David was born. Ruth begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, Jesse begot David. So Ruth would have been the great grand mother of David. She has that tremendous fame. This story of Ruth was apparently recorded in a time of David. By the time this was recorded in chapter four, it mentioned David's birth. So it was recorded during that time. That means that when David became famous, Ruth became famous and an entire book was written about David's great grandmother.

It is somewhat like today where many of us may look forward to Robert Liardon's coming to town. But every time I recall Robert Liardon, I think about his grand mother. When Robert Liardon became famous, his grand mother becomes famous too. I saw in some of his seminars, when he teaches, his grandmother was there. Some women not only excel through their gifting like Deborah. Women can excel through the virtue of being a woman and an ability to submit and serve. It looks like a small little thing. Remember greatness and fame are only tools and instruments that God gave in this life. Some times God predetermine that a person be unknown virtually by the world but be obedient to Him. It depends more on the call and the gifting of God. What is important is that if God so determine that you espouse a virtue in your life then bring it forth to the best of your ability.

Ruth was not thinking of being famous. Ruth was only thinking of serving, submitting and giving her entire life. It would have been at most ordinary life. But she became famous for forsaking her own home and taking care of Naomi. The entire town knew her during her time. In David's time, the book of Ruth was well circulated and well known. People knew about the ancestry of David. I think about Kenneth E. Hagin and his mother. His mother had a visitation from the Lord when her son Kenneth Hagin was born. The predestination of God is amazing.

I remember my mother when she came to know the Lord. I know that God had a call on my life and God had a call on my sister's life too. My mother had a very strange dream. In that dream, after she came to know the Lord she saw my sister and me. In that dream, I was holding a piece of red cloth and so was my sister. My red cloth was opened but my sister's cloth was not opened yet. That was before my sister went full time into the ministry. During those days, she wanted to go into the ministry but my parents opposed her. I am amazed as I looked back that God should choose and predestined things even before we know Him. At the predestination of God, my mother had a vision or a dream of heaven. When she was there, she saw part of heaven and the trees of heaven. She said in that dream she remembered that I, her son had gone by there before her. When she got out of her dream, I told her the reason for that. I told her, "It is because I was the first one in the family to come to know the Lord. Subsequently you also came to know the Lord and now the whole family has come to know the Lord." All these are part of the predestination of God. God was working in the life of my mother. That assures me and gives me some sense of

destiny. Even before I was born again, God was already there working in my life and the life of my family members.

From the example of Ruth, we realize that sometimes a woman can rise up to greatness without demonstrating any special gift. She just has to exercise the normal gift of being a woman and an ability to submit and to serve. Any factory manager will tell you that the best workers, who could do routine work and detailed work, are the women. You look into these factories and see that a vast majority those doing routine work of putting the computer circuits all together are women. Ladies have a certain knack for tremendous hard work. They could do it repeatedly and yet they would not be tired. Think about the homemakers cooking everyday and doing all those household chores. I realize that some men are quite good at that too. Some husbands are actually househusbands. Then you have the opposite. Some women are actually professionals but they can not cook a decent meal for their families. Well, each one got to discover their place in life. But the majority of women have a knack for housework. Ruth especially excelled in her ability to submit, to yield, to just be a maidservant. She kept to her humble calling but she rose to greatness. The entire book of Ruth is dedicated to her.

Abigail

We go to the third great woman called Abigail whose story is found in the book of I Samuel chapter 25. Abigail was also married but Abigail has a different virtue. She has the same quality to serve and to submit as Ruth but the main thing that stands out in her life is her tremendous sense of righteousness, common sense, and conscience. Even though Abigail's husband refused to help David and his men, she saw the perilous situation her husband put them in and quickly intervened to diffuse the tension. What stood out in her life is her quick grasp of situations and her knowing the right thing to do at the critical moment. She has the ability to quickly make up for her husband's ill manners. She was as astute as her husband was obtuse.

The situation was that David has been guarding Nabal's sheep. During the time of festivity in 1 Samuel 25:5 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent ten young men; and David said the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David." So when David's men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited. Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?" So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

David was coming to kill Nabal. But right at that time there was a woman who stood in the gap and saved a potential conflagration between David's and Nabal's men from exploding. Seeing how wisely she conducted herself in this critical situation, David fell in love with her. She stood out in a very difficult situation. Her husband did not want to help David but she stepped in and won over David and his men with words and gifts. She knew her husband was wrong. So there had to be something stronger in her to cause her to do what she did. What was it? It was her sense of righteousness, of knowing what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to avoid.

See God has bestowed upon many women the sense of being able to know what is the right thing to do even before the full understanding can come. They sort of sense potential danger; they have a strong common sense. As we realize sometimes common sense is not so common. What would a lesser woman do? She would sit just in the house and say, "I can not do anything about it," and just go and hide in a corner while David comes and slaughter everyone. She could have been one of those timid little women but she was not. Abigail had a sense of submission but there was also a strong sense of righteousness in her. She stood firmly in the matter of righteousness, even in the face of her husband's wrongdoing. That can be very difficult for a woman. I can tell you some of you men think that women just want to go against their husbands, no. But a woman often finds herself in a difficult situation when she has to choose between doing what is right and submitting to her husband when she knows her husband is in the wrong. Christian women find themselves in this dilemma since the bible talks about submission. When the husband is wrong, the Christian wife may have a personal crisis on hand. However, that sense of righteousness in Abigail prevailed and she secretly prepared all the gifts for David and his men without Nabal's knowledge.

In verse 18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But verse 19 look at the last phrase But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

Was she wrong? Well, it is a matter of situational ethics. She knows that if she told her husband, her husband would say no. In the end, her husband would die, she would die and all their servants would also perish. Where it is a matter of life and death, the principles of situational ethics come into the picture. It is the principle of choosing the lesser evil. In verse 20 So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming toward her and she met them.

David was determined in verse 21 and 22 to kill Nabal. Life and death was at stake. Verse 23 Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. So she fell at his feet and said, "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. Look, she also has the quality of Ruth a submissive ability. Verse 25 Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men my lord whom you sent. The word nabal means fool.

Many women are constantly caught in that kind of situation. Some husbands are rather anti-Christ in their thinking and action. A Christian woman may send her children to Sunday school under the pretext of sending them for ballet or piano classes or some other excuses. She knows that if her husband finds out the truth, she would be beaten up. However, she persistently does it because she has a common sense of what is the right thing to do. In our day and age if a child grows up without some form of moral education they have a higher chance of going astray. Many godly women do not have godly husbands. They sneak their children to Sunday school and come home late. The husband asks, "How come your church service ended so late? A normal church service ends at twelve noon. Where did you go after that?" She bears all the scolding, serves her husband, and cooks him a very nice meal. One day God touches the husband through the little children who have been growing in the Lord. The husband comes to know God. We all rejoice. We all praise God. The husband comes to church, becomes active in church, and serves God. However, let us not forget one thing. This came about because of the persistence of a dear little wife, bullied by her big bully of her husband, constantly going against the direct commands of the husband and seemingly contradicted God's Word on the matter of submission in order to see that her children grow in the Lord. Finally, everybody say, "How wonderful is this family." But they forgot the person who did all the work, who took all the bruises and all was not in vain. The bruises and hurt heal with time. Let us not forget the bravery of many women who have made tremendous sacrifices to win their entire family to the Lord. All this came about through the prayers of one faithful woman. That is where the heroine is.

Here is Abigail. Her sense of righteousness was so strong that it would not have permitted her to be idle. She had to do something and she knew that appeasing David and his men with gifts and provisions was the right thing to do. Look at her argument. All her arguments are based on principles. This is why I say that even though Confucius may teach that a family is everything but the Bible teaches that the Word of God is everything. So whenever a situation arises that pits a family against God's Word, God's Word should take precedence. You could be married to a thief. According to Confucius' teachings, it means that you have to be loyal to that thief. But the Word of God tells you otherwise. You have to be loyal to godly principles. That is where the difference is. Christians may emphasize on the solidness of a family relationship but it must be based on principles. My relationship with my wife is based on principles. I will tell her very frankly if something I believe is right, I will support it fully. If there are things, which I can not fully agree, I will pray with her but I will not give my support just because I am her husband.

I want you to act the same way with me. If I go astray from God's ways, I do not expect you to follow me and go astray from the Lord too. If you see me going off from the Lord, you must tell me. If I jump into the pit, you do not jump into the pit as well. We have to base our family life on the Word of God. Otherwise, no one will be saved. I know that runs against traditions. Some cultural traditions emphasize family loyalty onto death but God does not want that kind of death. In India, there was a custom where when a man dies and is burned in a funeral pyre, his wife was expected to jump onto the pyre to be burnt and join him in the other world.

In order for someone to be saved, somebody else must have the sense of righteousness. In the same way, I love my mother. I love my parents. When I came to

know the Lord my family went against me. Some of my friends said, “You are not loyal to your family religion.” I sat down, prayed and in the end, I came to this conclusion. I have asked my mother, “Why are we worshiping these idols and receiving no answer? I am searching for the true and living God. If for the past thousand years, my ancestors have been worshiping the wrong god and if I just follow blindly, I am not really helping my parents. I may be loyal to them but I am not helping them. However, if really I have come to know the truth, the real way I can show my love is to follow what I discovered first and then tell them what I have discovered. Is this the real way to show love? People said, “You don’t love your parents if you don’t follow their religion.” No, the real way you show love is through truth. Love minus truth is not love. And so I came to my parents and said, “I am a Christian not because I just follow some people. It is because I see there is sense in what the Word of God is saying. If I were to just follow and worship all these idols, it does not make sense to me. It does not answer the call of my heart. Mum, if I really love you and if I find the truth, I should follow the truth and tell you about it. If I follow you blindly, it doesn’t mean that I really love you.” In the end, my mum came to know the Lord.

Many of us are caught in this situation like Abigail where she had to choose between doing what it is right and obeying her husband who is in the wrong. Sometimes the husband is right and sometimes the wife is right. The other spouse will have to decide accordingly. What are you going to do? You are already associated by your marriage. But you can disassociate from your spouse’s action if you do not agree with him or her. If your husband tells you to smoke, if your husband tells you to deal in drugs, are you going to do it just because you are his wife? Of course not. If your wife goes the wrong way, are you going to just follow along? Not all women are like that but some women may have wicked ways like Jezebel. A lot of what king Ahab did was due to Jezebel.

A lot of strong husbands have enough sense of righteousness not to put up with nonsense in their homes and in their lives. However, some husbands are like king Ahab. When Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard and he refused to give it to Ahab, he sulked, cried, and became depressed (1 Kings 21:1-4). His wife, Jezebel, said, “Why are you crying? You are the king.” She then took the husband’s ring, wrote letters in Ahab’s name, and sealed it with the husband’s ring. Everybody thought the husband has authorized the letter but actually it was entirely the wife’s doing. That relationship was not correct. Right is right wrong is wrong. Remember after you die, if your husband dragged you to hell, you can not tell God, “Lord, I am here because of my husband.” In the same way, husbands, you can not stand in the sight of God and when God asks you for an account of your life, you can not say, “Lord, I can not fulfill your ministry because of my wife.” You can not blame God even for your life partner. In heaven, there is no more marriage. We are all answerable for our personal life. On earth, there is marriage and God regard husband and wife as one. However, we should not abuse that oneness.

Sometimes the husband is guilty of wrongdoing. His wife is aware of her husband’s wrongdoing. If only the wife would stand up on her own two feet of righteousness, she would have turned the husband back to God. Wives, listen carefully - the only person who can win your husband is you. The only person the husband will listen to in his state of wrongdoing is you. You are the last resort that God gives for your

husband to turn to. And if you don't allow yourself to be the mouthpiece of God, not only your husband will be destroyed but your family and you will be destroyed. The sense of righteousness must be there. I know it is difficult for some ladies. Learn from Ruth, learn from Abigail how to submit and speak correctly.

This is where Abigail makes a virtue of righteousness. She puts the right principle above her family. She went against her husband's wishes and said in verse 26 Now therefore, my lord, She has a way of talking. Remember this point No. 3 must be matched with point No. 2 the ability to submit. You can be right using the wrong way. Some people are right but they try to prove their rightness the wrong way. They end up domineering and hurting people. You have to be right and then you have to have the right spirit about being right. You can win an argument and lose a friend. That means you got the truth but not the spirit of truth. The spirit of truth is the spirit of love, a spirit of humility, a spirit of gentleness.

Here is Abigail and she said in a very humble, submissive but powerful way. Verse 26 Since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand. Verse 27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. Verse 29 Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God. Then her argument in verse 30 and 31 she said, "And it shall come to pass one day the Lord will fulfill what He spoke to you about your being king and appoint you to rule over Israel." Then verse 31, "One day when you are king and you look back at this time you will regret because you avenge your own hand."

You see, she herself was walking on righteous principles and she is asking David to walk on righteous principles too. She told him, "What you are doing now you must not do rashly. But one day when you are king you look back at this incident and you will regret that you have done what you did in destroying and having bloodshed and avenging yourself by your own hand." Killing innocent people is something David normally does not do. However, he almost did so in this case.

Her entire argument was a woman with common sense. Abigail is a woman with a strong sense of righteousness. Right is right wrong is wrong. She will not compromise on her righteous principles, even if it means disobeying her husband. What a fantastic woman. And in verse 37 Being a good wife she had to tell her husband even though her husband disagree with she had done. Even though she knew that will affect her relationship with her husband, she still went ahead and told him. In verse 37 when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him.

I don't know what she said but possibly this is what she said. "Dear, you know you sent those young people away. David came with a group of soldiers to kill all of us. However, I have gone ahead and I have sent all these presents and prevented David from carrying out the slaughter. The husband never realizes how close he was to death. He must have a heart attack, collapsed, and then ten days later he died. How on earth Abigail ever got involved with Nabal, we do not know. Nabal may have been a good person in his earlier days but turned into a bad person when he grew rich. We do not know. Men and women can change because of wealth, fame, and power. Either they change for good or they change for bad. In the Lord, they can change for good.

Remember if you are single and found a life partner who does not know the Lord nor follow His ways, your spouse can turn out to be a crook. I wonder what Adolph Hitler's wife thinks of him. I am sure when she first fell in love with that fellow she never dreamt that he could turn out to be a despot and a megalomaniac. However, people may gradually change over a period. In this case, Hitler's wife may have accommodated his changes and even change along with him. Gradually, unrighteousness and iniquity seep into their life in increasing measures. Before marriage, they were a clean young couple. Twenty years later, they have changed into cunning, conniving crooks. You never know.

Therefore, we are not sure how Abigail got into a relationship with Nabal. When Nabal changed in his character for the worse, she never consented and she never flowed along with Nabal when he went astray. You do not realize how precious this Abigail is. However, I know that it is easier for Abigail to become like Nabal than Nabal to become like Abigail. For her to preserve her purity, integrity and righteousness through so many years with Nabal is marvelous. Usually if an innocent person marry a crook before long you have two crooks. It is very rare for an innocent person to marry a crook and they turn out to be two innocent persons. Bad influence is very insidious and people tend to have a herd mentality, following the crowd blindly. Couples are always siding for each other, not based on righteous principles but based on carnal relationship. Of course, we need mutual respect between husband and wife. We learn how to disagree without being disagreeable. It is important to base marriage on righteous principles and not on carnal and unrighteous principles.

Abigail was strong on righteous principles and that is why David fell in love with her. After the husband died and the days of mourning passed, David asked for her hand in marriage. David knew that she would be a tremendous asset to him. She could build greatness into him. Here was a woman who could counsel him in difficult times. Here was a woman who would base her marriage on godly and righteous principles.

Now David was not turned off by Abigail's seemingly insubordination to her husband, Nabal. He could have thought of her negatively and say, "If Abigail doesn't obey her husband Nabal all the time and if I marry her, she would do the same to me." David did not think of her negatively but rather thought positively of her sense of righteousness. There is something beautiful about Abigail and her sense of righteousness. He knew that marrying Abigail might mean receiving rebukes from her whenever he strays from righteousness. Nevertheless, he would not mind since he was someone who wanted to excel in righteousness. He was someone who does not mind being told that he is wrong. He is someone who wanted to base his marriage on principles. For all these, he was willing to take Abigail as his wife. She stands out as one of the great women in the bible. The story is not recorded here but possibly, Abigail must have been a tremendous influence on David's life during his formative years before he was enthroned as king. Abigail must have been a positive influence for righteousness in David's life.

Esther

Another great woman is Esther. Esther was a very beautiful woman but her virtue was not only her beauty. Her virtue was sacrifice. I touch on keys that are very strong for women like submission and common sense. Women can develop these qualities in their lives into greatness. Esther's greatness is based on her willingness to sacrifice.

Just like the story of a mother who gave her blood to the child to drink, Esther was willing to put everything she ever had including her life as stake for a higher cause. She says if she dies, she dies. At that time in Babylon, the Jews were threatened by a death sentence.

Esther in chapter four was told by Mordecai to help. And this is Esther's statement in chapter four verse 15 to 17. Here is where Esther shines bright as a star. When she was beautiful, she already shone bright. But now she shines brighter still because her character has come forth. Verse 15-16 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

Here was a woman occupying the highest position in her country available to women. She was willing to risk her position, put her entire career, her entire future all for one cause to save her people. She was willing to sacrifice herself for her Jewish nation. Even Mordecai says, "Do not think you can get away while you are up there." Most probably, she would have been able to get away. She may die in some other way possibly because of the judgment of God if she did not obey. Nevertheless, she would have been preserved to a certain extent and not killed by the commandment for the king loved Esther very much. Somehow, she was willing to put her entire life for one cause.

This is a virtue that many women have. Their ability to sacrifice as many times go beyond what many men could have achieved. The sacrifices that women go through involve their entire life. This is quite hard for many women especially if you are professionals. Supposing that you get married and the children are born. Deep in their heart of hearts, women want to bring up their own children. But for some women to resign their jobs and become a full time homemaker is a great sacrifice. They end up looking like nobody in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world where mothers are not appreciated. Perhaps they may even earn five or six figures salaries. They could be directors in their own companies. Then for them to resign to give their life to three or four children is something that only God can work in the life of the mother. Yet, there are mothers who have done that. They have given up fame and fortune just to bring about godly children.

One of the famous women in church history was John Wesley's mother, Suzanna Wesley. She wrote an entire book about how to bring up children. John Wesley's wife sadly was not that kind of wife who befits such a man of God. It is said that John Wesley's wife was always complaining and running down her husband's ministry. On hindsight, we see that John Wesley's wife was not a helpmate to him although he was a successful minister. However, John Wesley's mother was a tremendous influence in his life. She had a book on bringing up children. In one of her books, she mentioned that one of the first goals for bringing up children is to learn to break the will of the child without breaking the spirit. What a powerful statement. Why did she say that? It is because all human beings have a selfish freewill. One of the things a child has to learn is how to submit. But many people instill submission in a child by breaking the child's spirit until the child has no more initiative. You see children sitting very quietly and passively in a classroom. I am sure they are passive in everything they do. They have no more spirit of achievement, no more adventurous and pioneering spirit. So there is a skill she talks about in learning to break a child's will so that the child

learns to submit and learns authority without breaking the pioneering and creative spirit in them.

Many women who are caught up in the business and professional world tend to make home making secondary in their lives. They place their careers first or in keeping up with the Joneses or in making more money. They want to have more income. They do not take pride in being a mother. They do not take pride in learning the principles and the skills through the Holy Ghost. You can be a modern day Suzanna Wesley to influence Christian mothers to raise their children in a godly environment. You could be imparting godly wisdom to Christian mothers in today's context and challenges of raising up children. You could write about principles like John Wesley's mother did in bringing up children. Learn from all that is there. In the same way in my ministry you will notice that what I teach I get from God. But I learn all I can. I read all I can. Every prophet, evangelist, pastor, apostle, and teacher any book I could lay hand I learn. What we need is our own unique revelation from God. In the same way, mothers need to rise up since today's culture and situation is different from our ancestors. We do not pick up a treatise written by Tertullian or Origen in the third century to preach to today's mothers on how to raise children. We face a different situation where if the Christian mother does not raise her children in the fear of the Lord, then Hollywood will take over her children. The Internet will take over. The Supreme Court will take over. The New Agers will take over. Every other ideology of every stripe and shadow will take over your children because you were not careful to impart a Christian upbringing to your children.

It is a call to be a mother. Something that you could take joy in just like a person is called to be a prophet, apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher. There is a call to be a mother and you take delight in that role. That call entails the fourth virtue of sacrifice. A mother's sacrifice is unknown to the world and to the eyes of men. Unknown are the sacrifice of your tears and your prayers. Many times when your children have gone astray, you prayed them back in. Many times your husband is not successful you prayed him back into success. You are behind the scene all the time. One day you receive your crown from heaven. For all those things that you have done, not a single person have known what you have done. It's a career to be a mother. The only difference is that your husband has not paid you a five-figure salary yet you gave him the best of your sacrifice. Husbands, some of you are too stingy with your wife. The only time you give anything to your wife is on her birthday. The only time you give allowance to your wife is for the marketing. All the salary you earned is yours and all your wife has is what she saved from her marketing. It also partly the fault of husbands who do not realize that it's a career to be a mother. It is an entire career in itself to bring up children and we need to take joy in it. There is great sacrifice in being a mother and the sacrifice can be quite difficult.

Look at it this way. In business, you do make sacrifices. Nobody succeed without some sacrifice. There is sacrifice involved in any achievement. However, the difference is after you achieved success, you do get recognition for your sacrifices, either in financial remuneration or in recognition in some way for your effort. But let me ask you if a mother makes sacrifices for her family, will she get her recognition on this earth? She may slog for years before her children grow up strong and successful. Finally, her children may enter her in some Mother's Day contest and she finally wins an award for her motherly sacrifices. Even then, for every mother who gets some

recognition, thousand other deserving mothers are bypassed. During the years she is raising up her children, very seldom will she get any recognition, especially if her husband is blind and unappreciative to her sacrifices.

Here is Esther who says, "If I perish, I perish." That's the greatest virtue. What else is she famous for? Her beauty. She is also famous for her willingness to put her life and limb in danger for the sake of others. That sacrificial nature rises up in her life.

Mary

Finally in the book of Luke is the fifth great women in the bible. We have Mary in Lk. 1:26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this is. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. After some long commands and long blessings, then verse 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Then verse 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Now she has a submissive quality in her life. But the other thing about her life we must take note is a great spirituality and devotion. There are many devoted women. In many homes, there is a woman who is a spiritual lighthouse although it should be the man. More often than not, the man is busy earning the living and busy about the career. The woman is praying for the children when they are sick. It is the woman who is encouraging bible reading in the house. The woman has been developing spirituality in the household. But this is the fifth quality a spiritual devotional woman. Mary espoused this virtue, even to the extent that when she yielded to God to be the vessel in which the Messiah could be born, it was at the expense of losing her betrothed. You remember the story in the book of Matthew how Joseph was thinking of putting Mary away. Think about Mary coming to Joseph wanting to obey the Lord at the expense of her relationship with Joseph. But Mary was a very devoted woman. She is constantly pondering over spiritual things. She is one of those rare breed of spiritual women. Today we have a lot of career women. We need a lot of devotional women.

In the book of Acts 1 among those people who gathered in prayer in verse 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Look at the Mary the mother of Jesus and His brothers. I would think that the mother had a tremendous influence of all the other half brothers of Jesus. Every time you see them together in a group although not all of them came to know the Lord in the early days of the Lord's ministry. But Mary had such a tremendous spiritual influence of the whole family. Don't ask me about Joseph. I don't know what he was doing all this time. He may have passed away by this time. The bible did mentioned about his dreams in Mathew. After that, there is very little mention of Joseph. But it seems that the pillar of strength in the family was Mary. She was the spiritual type. I believe that in many families, if you remove the spirituality of the wife, the spiritual light shining in the family will grow dark. Most men are not doing their role. The wife is constantly praying. You can examine it now. When your

children are sick who does the praying? If it is the husband – good - praise the Lord you are taking the right place. But if the answer is the wife something is wrong. The husbands are not doing their role.

Many times the wife is praying. She is the devotional type of person like Cornelius who is always very devout, always very spiritual. The husband can be the worldly type, career type and going after money and position. The wife is praying all the time. All she wants is a simple roof on her head. The husband is thinking of a bigger house, bigger car, and bigger career. Then the wife is usually the devoted person praying. Now not all women are like that. Some women are worldly. But it is a virtue in the bible that Mary excels in her spirituality. Her interest is spiritual things. Her interest is in the things of God. In many churches, the vast majority of believers that attend churches are the women. In a lot of Christian meetings you look at the congregation and you say three quarter are women. Where are all the young men gone? They are out there in the world making money. But the responsibility lies on the women. A lot of them are devoted and are praying to God for their husbands, praying to God for their loved ones to come into the kingdom of God.

So there are five virtues that ladies may espouse to could rise up to greatness. These virtues can bring them up to greatness. Not that an angel will appear to you in your devotional time but you never know what may happen. No. 1 build on your anointing. People will not just recognize you because you are a woman. But they can recognize you when you build on your anointing that God have on your life.

No. 2 you can build on the quality of submission. This is something that a man is not fully capable of because for a man to be feminine, he becomes a lesser man. Men need to espouse leadership quality with gentleness. Men need to espouse bravery with the ability to take risks, to protect, to forge ahead and yet be gentle about it. But for women, their supreme quality is their feminine quality and the quality of the power of submission. Submissive wife becomes a jewel onto the Lord.

No. 3 as we have seen Deborah, Ruth, Abigail's life for women you have a special intuition that God gives to you. Time Magazine once carried an article on the scientific analysis of the brain cells and the electric wave to see the left side and right side of brain functioning. It has been scientifically validated that women do things differently from men. For the women when they say a word it goes to both their left-brain and their right-brain. For most men when they speak it always goes through their left-brain. The right brain is the area of emotion and feeling. So when a woman speaks a word her feelings are involved. When a man speaks, sometimes his feeling is involved and sometimes it is not. It is because it is just their analytical part of their being coming out. There is one thing we realize that God does give ladies a common sense of righteousness of what's the right thing to do like Abigail. You ask any family, the wife would have the instinct to say, "I don't think this is the right thing to do. I think we should do it this way more gently." Or, "I think this is the proper way to do it." Afterwards as we tune ourselves properly, we realize that, that is the right way to go about it. However, if a woman is hurt like Sarah, she can be a bit rough in treating Hagar. But there is that sense of righteousness in women that they could develop in order to be a helpmate to their husbands.

The fourth is also a feminine virtue. It is the virtue to sacrifice. When women make sacrifices, they do earn their reward but they do not earn the recognition. It takes even greater sacrifice to be willing to do that but you have your heavenly reward.

The fifth quality strongly espoused in the Word of God is the spiritual and devotional quality. I know because I used to go for morning walk. The first thing I found out when I go for morning walks is that most of the early risers are old people. I do not know what happened to all the young people. There are a few young people but most of them are old people. The other thing I found is most of them are ladies. There is a field and most of the people seem to be sitting down. Few people are sitting and meditating whether they know God or not I am not sure. I know one of them use to read the bible out there. Most of them out there doing their devotional time are women. The next time you go to a church camp, wake up early and you see who does their devotional life. The consistent ones are the women. What happened to the men? Some of them play badminton, table tennis, swimming and they passed out the next morning. They have no more energy for spiritual matters. But the women tend to have the spiritual qualities and the steadfastness to build them into tremendous qualities in God.

2. WOMANHOOD IN GOD

We often hear this statement: behind every successful man, there is a woman. I would also say the reverse is true. Without a great man, there will not be a great woman also. This applies to the family situation. No matter how good a mother is, it would not be complete without a good father. Thank God for good husbands and good fathers to the children. That is the greatest blessing that mothers can have in a marriage life and family relationship. Sometimes mothers are like busy bees. They go about fulfilling their daily chores and even daddy's work if he is not around. Many times mothers ask themselves where is their own private time. Where is my own private time with the Lord? I want to encourage you mothers. When you put your family first, you find that you could hardly cope with the day's work. However, if you reverse it and put God first, He will put you first and then you will find that your daily work is blessed. When your heart is right, God will pour forth the strength to bless you.

Many times, we praise God for godly mothers. We can learn a lot from godly mothers. When God bestows motherhood on a woman and anoints her womb to bring forth a child, the godly seed is already inside. The anointing is already there. Just like when you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior the anointing is there to function as a full fledged Christian. The difference is sometimes we are not aware of it. We have not function to the maximum capacity. What hinders mothers is the failure to function to the full calling and the full capacity that God has enabled them to. One of the greatest hindrance is a lot of mothers have not learnt how to deal with their emotional life. When ladies speak, they speak with the mind added with emotion whereas the men dwell on the principles. Ladies tend to mix the principles with emotion. Women's emotion comes stronger.

God placed a lot of emotional love and emotional strength into a mother's heart so that she can take the stress and still be blown up. This is my own observation. Sad to say the devil sought to destroy this area. Many times especially women whose emotional problem is not dealt with will bring their emotional baggage into the family life when they get married. It will also rub on to the children and even husband.

So this morning I want to share from scriptures the example of two ladies who dealt with their emotional problems. Dealing with their emotional problems enables mothers to function to the best capacity that God has called them to. We must learn how to get hold of God and to get to God's side. God has called you. God is always on your side. When we face any disappointments, frustration, fear, feeling that we are nothing, we are not able to do the job that God has entrusted us to do, get hold of God.

Hannah

There is a woman in I Samuel chapter one. She has a lot of emotional stress. She is the wife of Elkanah. I Sam. 1:2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. It was customary, though not sanctioned by God, for a man to take a second wife when his first wife was barren. Hannah went through a lot of rejection because she had no child. She even suffered emotional abuse from the other wife as 1 Sam. 1:6 says, And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb. Verse 8 she was weeping. Hannah was going through a terrible emotional upheaval because she could not bear a child. Verse 10 And she was

in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. When her husband took her to the temple to pray, she was going through an affliction of her soul.

Many women experience emotional hurts in a variety of situations and circumstances. Women must run to God, take hold of God's Word, and release it to God. One of the ways to deal with our emotional problem is to learn to release it to God in prayer and worship. The whole chapter of I Samuel chapter one talked about Hannah and her husband went forth to prayer and worship. A woman who spends much time in worship will gradually become emotionally stabilized as the Lord heals the areas of hurts and emotional scars in her spirit, soul, and body. As you forget your emotional wounds and freely worship the Lord, there will be a fresh anointing that comes over you to break the yokes of emotional bondages and heal your inner self. Women who are liable to throw tantrums and seized with depression and melancholy because of some severe disappointments should spend more time worshipping the Lord. Just forget about yourself and concentrate on ministering to the Lord's needs. When you put God first, God will bless you and heal you.

Verse 15 she prayed No, Lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. And the Lord heard her prayer. The Lord accepted her sacrifice and her worship. Women must learn to get hold of God, come before His presence and be touched by His presence. You know what women tend to do. They look for people and pour out their sorrows and this is only a temporary relief. Women ministry must start with prayer and worship. I know that nothing except worship can change women's emotions and offer them real help. People can give a listening and sympathetic ear but that support is just only temporal. When a crisis situation begin to hit you hard, when the children begin to give you problem, and the devil tries to convince you that you are not able to handle it, you know who to run to. Run to God and spend time in His presence.

Pray until the presence of God falls on you and you are flowing in the presence and the love of God. You need to release your worship to God and receive strengthening in return. If women do not learn to do this, you know what will happen. Your children will be your punching bag and they will be on the receiving end of your emotional hurts, disappointment, and negative feelings that you can not handle. Or maybe you may treat your husband as a garbage bin and you dump all your emotional garbage on him.

We thank God for Hannah. Hannah has overcome her emotional problem. Hannah had a husband who doted on her. Her husband said, "Isn't it enough that you have me. Never mind if you do not have a child." Her husband loved her so much that the husband always gave her a double portion when the blessings were divided. I Sam. 1:5 But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah. Despite having such a loving and understanding husband, she nearly drove her husband away because she was in sorrow of mind. Many women are blessed with good husbands from the Lord. However, if they do not know how to surrender their emotional wounds and scars to the Lord, there is danger that the emotional wound would be a thorn in the marriage relationship that can create festering wounds. The devil always uses a woman's emotion to bring down a man. The woman should not give place to the devil to exploit her emotions to damage the marriage and relationship. Many ministers are blamed if they fall into immorality in the ministry. However, few realize that the devil uses the emotion of the woman to get her entangled with the minister

and bring about his downfall. The woman is equally to be blamed if she did not keep her emotions under reins.

Hannah finally learnt to overcome and deal with her emotional problem when she poured her soul to the Lord. She learnt to pray heart-felt prayers to the Lord. She learnt to cry out to the Lord. She learnt to get hold of God. Women, get hold of God. Some women's emotions can be so strong that they seek for love and attention, even in illicit relationships. Women's emotion is like bush fire - if it is not controlled, it will burn off everything in its path. Women, don't let the bush fire out. When there is any strong emotion holding you and you feel like giving up, it is time for a personal revival fire. Go to a secret place and pray through for revival fires to flood your heart from God. You will be refreshed and a God-fearing revival fire will replace your emotional bush fire.

Michal

Earlier, we saw the example of Hannah who dealt with her emotional problem and was blessed with a son. Let us turn to II Sam. 6 to see another woman who didn't know how to deal with her emotional problem and was rendered childless till the day she died. She is the wife of David. Her name is Michal. David married Michal and after that, he had to run away from his father-in-law, Saul, a mad and jealous king. It is no joke to have a mad man to be your father-in-law. Thank God, you do not have the devil to be your father-in-law. All Christian's young men and young ladies, please marry in the Lord. Be careful who you marry.

Michal's marriage was destroyed by her own father's hand. When Saul sought to kill David, David had to run. She helped to save David's life by making a plan and sent him off. She never got to see her husband again. She faced a broken marriage. When David was on the run, he met Abigail, another lady that inspired him so much that he took her as wife. When David built his kingdom, when peace was settled around him and when he reached a point of success, he remembered Michal. He asked for Michal. By that time, Michal was already married to Paltiel. Paltiel was forced to surrender Michal back to David.

Ladies can understand the trauma of a woman who had to face one broken marriage after another. Michal lost her first husband, David because of her own father. She was then married off to another. Now David claims her back and she had to break her second marriage. That is not all. When she came back to David, she found out that David had already six wives (2 Sam. 3:2-5). Even that is not enough – she will have to face the fact that David will keep on adding more wives to his marital chest. In II Sam 5:13 it says that David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David. Think of the rivalries and the competitions Michal had to face. It's no joke. Any lesser woman would have packed her bags and left.

She stayed on and because she had not dealt with her emotional problem look at II Sam.6:20 to see what happened. Remember Michal was returning to David, only to find out that her rating as first wife has dropped to seventh wife. She was the daughter of a king, a royal princess but in David's household, she was almost a nobody. If there is anything a woman can not stand, it is being treated as low priority on her husband's list of priorities. Her heart was still bleeding from this affront to her. After all that she

has done for David to save his life, she felt cheated and let down by David. David's love was too divided among the seven wives to pay enough attention to Michal to make her feel special. She bore this hurt in her heart but unlike Hannah, she didn't know how to pour her soul to the Lord. She didn't know how to surrender her emotional wounds to the Lord for healing. I tell you, ladies, if you have emotional hurts and unforgiveness that you have not surrendered to the Lord and receive His healing, you are a walking emotional time bomb that can explode at any provocation, to your own further hurt and the hurt of your loved ones.

When David was dancing and rejoicing because the ark was brought back to Jerusalem, Michal still had not resolved her emotional hurts nor mended her broken relationship with David properly. She could not share David's joy and happiness on this occasion of bringing home the Ark. She saw the maidens eyeing her husband and she was afraid that any of these maidens would ingrate themselves to David and David would take them as his wives. Her thoughts were not on her husband's happiness. Her thoughts were on her own fears of being left further behind among more wives. Finally, her emotional wound burst open and her mouth flowed with hurtful words saying, "David, you shamefully uncovered yourself." David was only wearing a linen cloth around his waist and nothing else. When he danced and kicked his legs, the maidens had a good view of his unmentionable parts. Now it hurt the husband especially since he was bringing the blessing back. In verse 20 it says Then David returned to bless his household. Suppose a man managed to close a million dollars deal and came back home in a state of euphoria. His wife did not think that was important and suddenly let fly a torrent of harsh words berating him for not keeping some promises to her. She didn't think of her husband's joy. She only thought of herself. What a time to open the mouth. God bless these women.

Now Michal did not fulfill her call at all. In verse 23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death. The bible did not say her womb was closed. I believe that because she got so bitter, so hurt that even the husband did not like to get near her. Michal may have developed a very quarrelsome tongue and would not hesitate to let off a stream of hurtful tirade whenever there is an emotional stirring up of her deepest wounds. As long as she has not dealt with her emotional problem, she will constantly let loose a barrage of accusations that can go on for hours like a broken record. Which man would like to come near such a woman? The result is that Michal bore no children till the day she died. This is in contrast with Hannah who poured her soul to the Lord and healed her emotional problem, and the Lord granted her a son called Samuel.

There is an invisible link between a wife's lack of submission to her husband and her barrenness. Very often, when a woman has a problem with her womb – like barrenness, internal bleeding, cysts and growth, - it has to do with her rebellious attitude towards her husband. When such a woman does have children, she may pass on the generational curse to her daughters, who may have the same symptoms of the womb. If you are barren or have problems with your womb, first check out the root causes. You will have to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the root cause of your problem with barrenness and womb problems. Remove all barriers that prevent you from having children. You may have to repent of your attitude towards your husband. You may have to be willing and submissive to him. You may have to repent of any generational curse in your mother's line.

David never had a very stable and good emotional love life. He had so many wives he does not know which one to love. He divided his love so thinly among his wives that he did not love any woman in a full and manly way. His stronghold for women may also be reacting, so that he lusted after many women without loving anyone in particular. That may have led him to commit adultery with Bathsheba.

Ladies, mothers you got to deal with your emotional problems. No matter how much feelings boiling up like a pot of vegetables soup, you have to learn to praise God in everything. Maybe your daughter, your children had done something to upset you. You are so disappointed. You are so bitter and so hurt, like the bitter gourd in the vegetable soup. However, learn to thank God even for bitter gourd soup. There are some vitamins and nutrition's inside. Forgive me since today I am sharing some housewife theology.

You see Hannah have learned how to get hold of God. I like this little song: He will never let go my hand, He will never let go my hand, though the storm may come and the wind may blow, He will never let go my hand. He will never let go your hand because you never let go of God's hand. You have to run to God. Hannah ran to God and see what is the outcome. She got the Lord on her side. Her husband was also got on her side. The husband so willingly agreed to her plan to give their best Samuel to the Lord. They raised up a priestly ministry. How wonderfully Hannah fulfilled the awesome call of motherhood. It all began in the heart of a mother Hannah. She knows how to get hold of God.

Michal had no child. I want to encourage you mothers and those who had no children or you are still believing God for a child. Understand this that God anoints the womb. God through the power of the Holy Spirit causes you to conceive. In Christ Jesus even you and your children are called heirs in the Lord. Actually, in the Lord, you and your children are brothers and sisters. A godly mother is willing to be humble and broken. Sometimes your child says, "Ma, I want to talk to you. You did something that hurt me." Be willing and humble. Let them pour out their grievances. God put the calling of motherhood inside you. Learn to treasure it. Humble yourself, be broken, and learn to get hold of God in praise and worship.

There are many scriptural principles you can learn even in the home as a mother.

Sometimes women face situations where you feel like you have failed as a mother and wife. However, when you fellowship with other women, you realize you are not the only one who feels that way. Every new mother who carries a little baby and made some mistakes in bringing up the child feel that she is the only one in the world dumb enough to make such a mistake. However, when you began to fellowship with other women, you realize that those are just feelings. You realize other women have that kind of feelings and have fought through those feelings into reality. They may not be facts. Yet, to a lady the feelings and the facts look like they are one. Women have to learn how to control and channel their negative emotions into positive emotions. The best way is constantly maintaining an attitude of thanksgiving, praise and adoration to the Lord.

We praise God that today we could remember mothers. As we were worshipping this song comes into my heart. It's a dedication to mothers.

When I was just a baby you held me in your arms and rock me to and fro. From toddler to teenager you helped me day to day in food, drink and everything.

That's not my song. However, here is a song that we dedicate to the mothers:

I thank God for you from my heart for giving your life for me.

I thank God for you mum for giving you to me.

For you are God's love reviewed in the flesh.

Here's for you mum. I appreciate you. A song from my heart just to say thank you.

For many are the days and many were the nights you cared for me in hard times and in need.

For many were the years and many were the tears you poured out your love for me.

For many are the days and many were the nights you cared for me in hard times and in need.

For many were the years and many were the tears as you poured out your love from our heart to me.

Just for you mum. I appreciate you. A song from my heart just to say thank you.

For many were the days and many were the nights you cared for me in hard times and in need.

Many were years and many were the tears as you poured out your love for me the love that is from your heart.

Just for you mum. I appreciate you. A song from my heart just to say thank you.

For many were the days and many were the nights you cared for me in hard times and in need.

Many were the years and many were the tears as you poured forth for me the love that is from your heart.

Just for you mum. I appreciate you a song from my heart just to say thank you.

Sometimes men you don't realize it but one ounce of encouragement can produce many pounds of strength. I know how some of you ladies feel when you come forward to the altar and you are publicly appreciated for all love and sacrifices for your family. Just a little encouragement here and there can keep you going stronger. I mean we are not talking of an over dosage of encouragement where you only live on encouragement to keep going. Then you lack strength. However, we believe that it is time to encourage people especially when they have been working so hard. Children, if you have never encouraged your parents and say thank you please do so. Husbands, if you have never said thank you to your wives and appreciate for all the labors they

did in bringing up your children you need to do so from time to time. As I say, an ounce of encouragement can produce many pounds of strength.

God has made women special and women have the ability to bring that extra touch. You will know it if you did every thing you can and you bring a lady I, she will find small little things to add to the situation or to the beauty of the place. I could imagine when God created Adam and the woman was not made yet. Adam saw the trees that God made, the animals that God made, and every thing that God made and they were beautiful. God said they were good. His creation was perfect and beautiful. When Adam saw the woman that God made for him, I believe every thing else looked different because there was an added difference to it.

What was this special ability that God gave to women that women need to excel it? If you notice in the book of Luke chapter 2, Jesus was now about 12 years old. They went off on the caravan together with the others when they came to Jerusalem. About three days later, they realized that Jesus was not among them and they had to backtrack to look for Jesus. When they came back to look for Jesus the bible tells us that it was not the father that said anything. It was the mother who especially felt that deprivation and it was her who expressed it in Luke chapter 2:48 So when they saw Him, - the word they represent the father and the mother. So together they saw Him Joseph was also there. They were amazed and look, it was His mother who said to Him. Son, why have you done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously. See women had the extra touch. They feel it deeper than men. They had the ability that God gives them.

See God has created every thing and the woman was another stroke of grace and blessing that God brings. Women is the extra touch to cap creation. By the word extra we do not mean just an add on. But we mean some thing that we put right there to bring every thing into place. It is not extra in a meaning of just an add on. But it a coup de grace, the finishing touches. When you have finished cooking the dishes or baking a cake and you display them, as a chef you give a finishing touch. So the word extra here is qualified as a coup de grace. The finishing touch brings brilliance out of the whole situation. And women, that's your role in God. Didn't the bible says women are the glory of men. You are the coup de grace of God that brings the enchantment. Perhaps the word extra is not good enough. We call it the great enchantment that God brings. The extra touch that God gives them.

It was not the father who followed Jesus Christ in His ministry it was the mother. Because many were the nights, many were the days when she will be worrying about her Son Jesus. Although officially He is the Son of God and there was no biological connection between them except her womb, yet it was her who cared for Him perhaps even more than the father. When Jesus was suffering on the cross, it was still the mother who was hanging around because this was her Son. She nursed this Child. This Child grew to be a man fully Son of God, fully Son of Man. But you can see this caring, this ability to stay through. In the book of John chapter 19:25-27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. It was the mother who cried more than anybody else when Jesus hung on the cross. It was the mother who felt the pain as much as

anybody else if not more. Of course, we know there is no pain and grief that can be felt like the pain of the Father God when His Son was on the cross. However, of all humans on that day who had any feelings for Jesus I believe His mother felt it most. Mothers have the quality of the extra touch.

Turn to Mark chapter 3. In the time of Jesus' ministry when His mother and His brothers came to see Him, I want you to know that His brothers wanted to see Jesus more than the mother. The mother had known Jesus to a certain extent to leave Him alone. But you look carefully in Mk.

3:31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And the multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." If you look at verses 31 and 32 there was a reverse. First it says that His brothers and His mother.

Understand that scriptures can be very precise in its details. There is a reason for a particular order. Like for example in the book of Numbers chapter 12 when Aaron and Miriam had a quarrel with Moses, it looks like Aaron was the one involved because Aaron's words were recorded. However, when God punished them, it was Miriam who got the bulk of the punishment because God knew it was Miriam's doing more than Aaron.

In this particular case it was not Jesus' mother who was interested in confronting Him. Look at His mother whose heart is torn. His brothers were bringing accusations against Jesus and saying all kind of things about Jesus. His mother just loves everybody. She loves both Jesus and His brothers and I could see the picture in my heart and mind. The brothers were the ones who wanted to confront Jesus and the mother says, "Well, if you go, let me go and try to help out the situation," and she was just tagging along them. They were the ones who wanted to confront Jesus. But why was she there? She was not a confronter all her life. You can see the revelation she was not a confronter. If anything else, she would absorb any accusations leveled at her. The Bible says she held these things in her heart and pondered over them. She was there because her flesh and blood sons were there and the other One given by God and she was trying to be a mother to all her children. You could see that extra touch.

Look over in the book of I Samuel. We all know the story of how Samuel was given by God to Hannah and God gives her a son and how in the end Samuel was dedicated to the Lord. Samuel was given to God and God continued to work in his life. But there are some passages here that we want to bring forth in regard to what Hannah did. I Sam. 2:18 But Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod. Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe. Can you see that? Hannah had that extra touch. Who would have thought of a mini robe to clothe little Samuel like a little priest? I tell you Hannah loves Samuel. Even though she dedicated Samuel to the Lord, her love for him was still there.

See ladies, God gave you powerful emotions. These powerful emotions need not be a burden. It can be an asset to make you powerful in the Lord because you make a difference in life. See ladies are good at details. The more I thought about this little detail of making this little robe, she may have taken the whole year to make that little robe. Men you need to listen sometimes to your wives. Sometimes they have these

little touches that you and I forget. When you are visiting your loved ones, your wife will remind you to find something for them. You say it is not important. These are all the little things that make a difference in life. How would you like it if your food were tasteless? How would you like to have your curries with no spices, no salt, and no taste? It is still food and nutrition. Why is it that the best chef takes a little bit of this ingredient and a little bit of that ingredient and turn an ordinary food into a colossus gourmet? Homemakers can take an ordinary plate of food, add a little extra touch and make the dish turn out different.

I know what some of you men are thinking the best chefs are all men. We got the quality but wait, we don't have the quantity. In the whole world, if you got to measure by numbers, who does the most cooking? The ladies. Women are the ones who mostly prepare the meals that feed the children, the meals that keep laborers going and the meals that makes society runs. What happens if the housewives of the world gang up and strike? The vast majority of humans are fed by these ordinary ladies who have kept society going. I want to emphasize the fact that ladies you are the coup de grace. You have the finishing touches to the beauty that God has brought.

Today people are encouraging working women to go out to work by giving them tax relief. However, I want you to know the highest call of a mother who bears her own children is to mother them yourself. There is nothing like brining up your own children. It is so big that Paul in the book of I Timothy and the book of Titus he talks about how the older women must teach the younger women how to be good mothers. I want to emphasize that being a mother is a high profession of God. You are a professional homemaker in God. Stand up and know that your call in God is recognized in the heavens above that the bible so securely mentioned it in the writings of the apostle Paul that this is their divine vocation.

When I was in Singapore, the Government was doing this survey of the role of mothers in the home. They calculated how much mothers are worth. They calculate the servant's pay, the cook's pay, the housekeeper's pay and guess what – they calculated that the average housewife's work was worth several thousand dollars a month.

Men don't be Pharaoh or slave driver to your wife. Don't expect-s her to wash your clothes, cook your food and pay her peanuts. Without your wife you realize you got to employ a cook, a housekeeper, a child minder and you add it all up she is doing it sacrificially for you for a miserly sum of allowance. They are worth more than that. They are the coup de grace the finishing touches of beauty that God has added to men.

So, find your role in that. Realize it is a high calling in God. Secondly with every calling comes an anointing. Do you know there is an anointing to be a mother as much as an anointing to be an apostle? Some of you who are elderly ladies who may not have families. I want you to know you could have adopted children. You could have spiritual sons and daughters in God. You could be a mother spiritually to many young wives. Didn't the bible say in the book of Timothy that the older women teach the younger ones? It is what God has made you to fulfill . There is an anointing to be a mother.

Let me close with a song I thank you mum for giving you to me etc.

3. 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 can not 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 can not 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.