

# How God Uses Messy Moms to Fulfill His Plan

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2021 16 Apr



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I think my daughters were around the ages of five and seven when I found myself in our walk-in closet letting out a scream of frustration. I don't remember what was going on that day, but apparently it was enough to make me realize I needed a "time out." I do distinctly remember the day one of them tattled on me when their father came home from work. They told him, "Mom said a bad word today!" Apparently in a moment of desperation, I had told one of them to "shut up," a phrase they were rightly forbidden to use!

No matter how good we try to be as mothers, there are simply some days we look back on and stamp with a big red "FAIL."

I'm thankful that God doesn't expect us to be perfect moms. He understands our weaknesses ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)) and sympathizes with us. And as many stories in the [Bible](#) illustrate, our struggles to "measure up" as a good mother can't keep His sovereign plans from coming to completion. If we are willing to see our failures from His perspective and adjust our lives according to the truths found in His Word, He can bring beauty from our mistakes that will glorify Himself and testify to His redeeming grace.

A "messy mom" is simply a mother who realizes she has made mistakes, and knows she'll never be perfect. Some of us have made rather large messes of our lives. Our past might be filled with regret, shame, guilt, and disappointments both in ourselves and how our lives have turned out. There are others of us who seem to be doing okay. We're able to "keep things in the road" for the most part, but we never quite feel like we've mastered the art of parenting and are quite aware of our weaknesses and insecurities that can derail us at any time.

No matter where we are on the path of motherhood, or even “grand-motherhood,” we can all be classified as “messy moms.” We might *be* a mess. We might *think* we’re making a mess of it all, but we all have this in common: we need the encouragement and hope that comes from a sure confidence in the overcoming grace of a sovereign God.

Scripture tells the stories of many women who “made a mess” of their lives from the human perspective, but when God stepped in, He took each one and made something beautiful from their failures. Here are just two such stories.



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## 1. Rahab

We first meet Rahab in [Joshua 2](#), when two Israelite men pay a visit to her house on the city wall. Rahab is described as a harlot; the biblical implication is that she either made her living as a prostitute, or managed such a house. These men had come to spy out the land; needing secrecy, they chose to stop at a place where it would not be unusual for two men to lodge.

Rahab knows where these men are from and why they have come. Stories of their miraculous crossing of the Red Sea forty years before still put the fear of God into her people. While Rahab’s lifestyle indicates she had no understanding of the *laws* of God, she acknowledged that He was *God in heaven and on earth beneath* ([Joshua 2:11](#)). Because she feared this God, she lied to the city officials, hid the spies, and later helped them escape over the wall of the city.

By the world’s estimate, Rahab wasn’t worth much. She was an immoral woman who lied without hesitation. Yet God had a greater purpose for her. He took the mess she had made of her life and drew her out of the wicked, Canaanite culture by His sovereign plans. The two spies promised Rahab they would preserve her life and the life of her family if she would mark her house with the scarlet thread and stay in the house under its protection. In this way, when the armies of God’s people took the city, they would know to save the

lives of those inside. Rahab needed to exercise [faith](#) by hanging the scarlet thread in order to procure physical salvation for her family. It was an immature, intellectual faith, but faith all the same.

What a beautiful picture of God's redeeming grace! Just like the blood of the Passover lamb protected the Hebrew children when the angel of death was released on Egypt, the scarlet cord reminds us of the blood of the Savior that provides atonement and forgiveness for our sin. And like Rahab, we must exercise faith in that blood to receive eternal, spiritual salvation.

When Jericho fell, Rahab went to live with the Israelites. Her intellectual acknowledgement of the Israelite God became a personal, living faith as she left her old life behind. She married Salma, a descendant of Judah's tribe ([1 Chronicles 2](#)). They had a son, Boaz, who married a Moabite woman named Ruth. Ruth gave birth to Obed, whose son was Jesse, whose son was David, the beloved king from whom the Messiah, Jesus came.

Not only that, but Rahab is one of only four women named in the genealogy of Jesus in [Matthew 1](#). She is listed in the "hall of faith" in [Hebrews 11:31](#), and her decision to save the spies is described as a work of faith in [James 2:25](#), even though she did it imperfectly.

Rahab's checkered past didn't prevent God from using her for His sovereign purposes. Neither can your past keep God from using you as a mother who makes an eternal difference. If we turn away from our old lives and give ourselves completely to the new life we find in Christ, God can use us just as He used Rahab, as a picture of redeeming grace.

## 2. Tamar

Tamar's story is found in [Genesis 38](#). She married Er, the firstborn son of Judah. Er had two brothers, Onan and Shelah. The Bible says that Er was an evil man, and the Lord took his life. In Hebrew culture they practiced a custom called "[levirate marriage](#)," where a woman would marry her brother-in-law upon her husband's death.

When a man died without a child, the man's unmarried brother would marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband.

Judah orders Onan to fulfill his obligation to Tamar, but he disobeys, and the Lord takes his life also. The youngest brother, Shelah, is not old enough to marry, so Judah sends Tamar back to her father's house to wait for him to grow up. In his heart, however, he did not plan to give Shelah to her as husband; he feared he would also die. In that day, Tamar

had no choice but to obey Judah; she was at the mercy of Hebrew law. She obediently waits...and waits...and waits. Finally, after years of delay, realizing that Judah is not going to keep his word, she decides to take matters into her own hands.

Tamar dresses herself as a temple prostitute, wrapping her face in a veil, and intentionally puts herself in a place where she knows Judah will pass by. Years have passed, and Judah does not recognize her, so he accepts her offer of prostitution. She extracts a promise of payment of a young goat, and convinces Judah to leave his signet ring, his cords (used like a belt), and his staff as a pledge. Judah sends his servants back with the promised goat, but she has disappeared, so Judah forgets about it and goes on with his life.

Tamar's encounter with Judah results in a pregnancy, which apparently was her intent all along. When Judah is told of his daughter-in-law's condition, he calls her to account for her actions as a harlot. Tamar confronts him with the evidence that he is the father. Judah realizes immediately that she has tricked him into providing an heir according to the Hebrew law because he withheld his son from her. He acknowledges, "she is more righteous than I" ([Genesis 38:26](#)).

This story is hard to understand from our cultural perspective. Both Judah and Tamar disobeyed God. Judah had an obligation to give his son in marriage; sleeping with a temple prostitute was wrong. Tamar chose to make her point by taking the actions of a harlot. One would think God would write them both off and move on to someone else to carry out His sovereign plans.

Yet, Tamar is also listed in the genealogy of Christ in [Matthew 1](#). She gave birth to twins by Judah; the youngest, Perez, is in the direct line of descendants to King David. In an unusual twist, her name is mentioned when the city elders bless Boaz for taking Ruth, the Moabitess, as his wife, fulfilling his responsibility as kinsman redeemer, a practice not too unlike the levirate marriage custom. It seems the Hebrew people recognized God's grace over Ruth's life as similar to the grace shown to Tamar in bringing her into the Messiah's line.

Tamar's story is an example of taking desperate actions when we find ourselves in a desperate situation. While her position was right (Judah was obligated to provide her an heir through one of his sons), she chose to take things into her own hands instead of waiting on God. Judah could very well have denied that he was the father, and she could have been put to death. Yet God showed her mercy and grace and redeemed her actions. She was no longer cast aside but became part of the redemptive line of Christ.

As mothers, we too often make rash decisions in a moment of desperation. We say things in frustration. We may overstep God's boundaries in an attempt to fix our situations. We

might, like Tamar, choose to act instead of wait. Yet God's grace abounds. God rescued Tamar from the mess she made; if we turn to Him, He will rescue us as well.



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## One Last Example

Scripture tells us about many more women who experienced God's grace in their failures.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, not only laughed at God's promises ([Genesis 18:12](#)) but tried to fulfill those promises with her own schemes. She convinced her husband to use an Egyptian servant as a surrogate ([Genesis 16:2](#)). When a child was conceived, she grew jealous and bitter, and treated Hagar and her son with disdain and hostility ([Genesis 21:9-10](#)). Yet, God chose to use her because He had made a covenant with Abraham. He fulfilled His promises just as He had said, and Sarah became the mother of the Jewish nation when she gave birth to Isaac.

What's interesting is that even after God performed a miracle in giving Sarah a child, she still was not the "perfect mother." At times she was selfish and jealous. She was cruel to Ishmael, driving him and his mother away from the family. But God never gave up on her. She also is listed in the [Hebrews 11](#) faith "hall of fame," "since she considered Him faithful who had promised" ([Hebrews 11:11](#)). God looked beyond her weaknesses and failures and saw faith.

Are you a "messy mom?" Then you're in good company. Don't let your past keep you from realizing the future God has planned for you. Don't let your weaknesses or failures define your life and keep you from seeing that God has called you to a great ministry, to raise up image-bearers for Christ, children who will grow up to love and serve the Savior.

Acknowledge your weaknesses and ask God for help. Repent when you sin. God's mercies are new every morning, especially for messy moms!

“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him” ([Lamentations 3:21-24](#)).

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