

MATRIARCHS

A 13 Week Study of Mothers of the Bible
*Discover the Power of Motherhood
through the Lives of Those Who Have
Gone Before Us*

Week: Three

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Biblical Mom: Rebekah

Title of Lesson: REBEKAH – Mothering from Barrenness

Key Influence: Grace for the Flawed, Blessings for the Barren

Key Verse: Genesis 25 & 27

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nSXnDQz6gc>

REBEKAH - Mothering from Barrenness

Rebekah was barren. It seems that barrenness ought to exclude Rebekah from being a matriarch and yet God had other plans. He has a habit of taking the most unlikely folks and using them as part of His grand design to redeem humanity. It really isn't that strange. Sarah, Rebekah's mother-in-law, was barren too. Sarah was 90-years-old when she finally gave birth to her son Isaac, the son of the promise. And God promised Isaac he would also be the father of many nations.

But twenty years into his marriage with Rebekah there was still no child.

"...and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Pad-dan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife...Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them." Genesis 25:20 and 26b (ESV)

The promise seemed unfulfilled, but God had something else planned. Something that Rebekah and Isaac knew could happen, I mean Isaac was born to a 90-year-old mother and a 100-year-old father, but twenty years is a long time to wait.

And I wonder if you have found yourself in a barren place in life. Perhaps all the promises made on your wedding day have been shattered. Maybe all the things you thought would bring you joy have ended up dry. Or money is tight and nothing is going right and all you long for is that bright light of the promise. You just need a little hope in the barrenness of every day life. And somehow when you feel dry and desperate you still have to be a mother. You still have children to guide and direct whether they are six months old or sixty-years-old.

Read Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-28:5. For background information read Genesis 24.

Let's see what we can learn from Rebekah about mothering from barrenness.

1. In Barrenness We Must Draw Near to God

Read the verse below and circle Rebekah and Isaac's response to barrenness.

“And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.” Genesis 25:21 (ESV)

As a response to barrenness Isaac prayed for his wife. And in the Hebrew this word could mean he prayed many times for his wife. Not just a one-time thing quick prayer. It is also important to note that Rebekah and Isaac kept on living. They prayed, maybe hundreds of times, and they lived life for twenty years waiting for the barrenness to go away.

As moms what is our first reaction to barrenness?

- o Do we check our bank accounts?
- o Wonder if someone could ever love us?
- o Call a friend or family member?
- o Bury ourselves in Pinterest, Facebook, or some other mind-numbing unproductive activity?

Too often my own response to dry barrenness is to do something counter-productive. I don't go to the spring of living water, instead I check out my dry cisterns of self-made hope. I review every mistake I have ever made, I surf the web for ways to feel happy or fulfilled. I try a Pinterest project to make me feel productive. But really all I need is to turn to the One who can satisfy, the One who can quench my barrenness.

Read the following verse and underline the two sins God's people have committed.

*My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water. Jeremiah 2:13*

Often in our barrenness it is easy to skip drinking from the spring of living water. Instead we seek joy in accomplishment, prestige, obedient children, a clean house, or a full womb. But God never intended us to live that way. He wants us to drink deeply from the spring of living water. He wants us to find our hope and joy in Him alone.

Underline what Jesus says will happen to the one who drinks his water. Now underline what that water will become in the one who drinks.

“Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:13-14 (ESV)

For each of us who have accepted Jesus as our Lord (or boss) and Savior we no longer have to be thirsty. Oh, but ladies when we stop drinking of the water Jesus gives (when we stop praying to Him, stop reading His Word, stop listening to His Word being taught, or get out of fellowship with other believers) we can become dry. And it is when we are dry and barren that we must go to the Lord in prayer. We must seek Him and cling to His promises or we will remain dry and barren. The great news is that when we seek God, He draws us close to Himself and He runs to us.

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” James 4:8a (ESV)

Don't get me wrong. Praying in your barrenness does not mean God will give you what you want like he did for Rebekah. But we have no hope, no promises, no connection to the Spring of Living Water if we do not pray, if we stay disconnected from church (even if you have been hurt by people in church before), if we do not spend time in the Word.

Ladies, may we never trade a cool drink of water – *something we desperately want* – for springs of Living Water – *what we desperately need*.

2. Fruit from Barrenness Requires Wisdom

Sometimes when we pray in our barrenness God gives us exactly what we prayed for. He may give us the job we asked for, the relationship we desired, or the baby we longed to hold. But often that fruit is much different that we expected.

Read the following verses and underline what Rebekah did when she didn't understand what was happening.

“And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” Genesis 25:21-23 (ESV)

Rebekah asks God for wisdom to help her understand what is going on when her pregnancy didn't go as she thought it would. Perhaps you found, as I did, that your kids have minds of their own and mothering is harder than you imagined. Or that marriage actually takes work and you wonder what to do next. Maybe the thing you knew would bring you joy or happiness really hasn't.

Where do we first turn when things don't go the way we planned?

- o Do we surf the web?

- o Phone a friend?
- o Post a ranting status update?

Maybe we ought to slow down and pray? When wisdom is what we need God promises to give it to us.

Read the follow verse and underline how God gives wisdom.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” James 1:5 (ESV)

God does not give only a smidgen of wisdom. He is not miserly or cranky when you come and ask Him for wisdom. No, God gives generously and He never puts you down for asking Him for wisdom. He just gives it generously. I don't know about you, but that gives my momma heart hope because I need God's wisdom to help raise the kids He has entrusted to me.

But there is something else we ought to consider as well. God does not call us to mother in a vacuum. So after asking God it is wise to find a mentor, a godly woman a step or ten farther down the mothering road than you are, and ask her to be your mentor. In Titus 2:3-5 Paul encourages “older women” to teach and train “younger women.”

I don't like to consider myself “older” but ladies I am older than many young moms and young moms you are older than teenagers...So if it is time for you to either seek a mentor or even find a mentee contact [The MOM Initiative](#) who can help you start a MOM group of your very own.

3. Favoritism Sowing Discord

Read the following verses and underline the description of Esau and the name of the parent who loved him. Then circle the description of Jacob and the name of the parent who loved him.

“When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. 28 Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Genesis 25:27-28 (ESV)

Esau was a manly man. If he lived in the United States now, I would picture him much like the Duck Dynasty men – long beard, camo pants, rifle toting, outdoorsman. Jacob on the other hand is more like an interior designer, he is quiet, prefers a neat home, and plenty of quiet time. The type of man who would get a manly mani-pedi every few weeks and never put waders on to go duck hunting. Isaac loved the taste of wild game and so he preferred Esau's company because they could chat about the best places to snare a pheasant or which arrow was their favorite. On the other hand Jacob and Rebekah could share stories about gardening and taking care of the home. It was just too easy to develop a favorite child.

I doubt Rebekah set out to like one of her sons more than the other. But life happens. Some people are just easier to be around. Sometimes a child goes through a difficult stage and it feels like every time you talk with him or her you end up arguing. Other times it is just difficult to find a common interest and it is difficult to build a close tight-knit relationship with someone who closes down. But moms we must guard our hearts and the hearts of our children.

*“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.”
James 2:1 (NIV)*

Rebekah and Isaac's favoritism led to sibling rivalry that eventually led to the family breaking apart.

How do we as mothers guard against favoritism?

- o Seek to spend time alone with each of your children at least once a month. For younger children use nap times for younger siblings as an opportunity to spend some special time with older siblings. For older children consider going on “mommy dates” when your spouse or friend can watch the other children.
- o If you are struggling to get along with a child make a concerted effort to learn about one of their interests or hobbies and talk with them about what you learned.
- o Look for something you appreciate about each of your children and tell each of them what it is you appreciate about them...Praise each child in front of the whole family.
- o Never compare your children to each other by saying, “if only you were more like....”

Favoritism can slip in easily if we are not spending time building up our children and developing relationships with each of them. Let us do the hard work of building strong relationships with all the children God has entrusted to us.

4. Choices and Barren Ground

I am guessing that all of us want to be good moms. We would like other to think of us as good moms. To that end it is easy to base our identity as a “good mom” on the choices our children make. A good mom’s kids never bicker at the grocery store or get called into the principal’s office or put in jail. At least that is how we mommas act when we feel ashamed over the call from the police station and gloat a bit too much over the honor roll.

Read the following verses and circle the choice Esau made then underline how it affected Rebekah and Isaac.

*“When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.”
Genesis 26:34-35 (ESV)*

It is inevitable that our children, who are prone to sin just like all of humanity, will one day make a decision that will break our momma hearts and send us down memory lane wondering what on earth we did wrong. Lysa Terkeurst says, “We moms should never build the stability of our identity on the fragility of our kid’s choices.” We can’t make choices for our children. We can guide and direct them, we can teach them principles by which to live, we can pray that the Holy Spirit will direct their decisions. But ultimately our children have to decide for themselves. When we plant our mothering identity in the ground of our children’s choices we will find that soil quite fragile.

So how do we mother when our children’s choices create barren ground?

- o **Pray.**
 - **For wisdom** about how best to address the character issue at the heart of the decision. If your child is young what sort of discipline is necessary. If your child is an adult how to best support and love your child while “speaking the truth in love” ([Eph. 4:15](#)).

- **For the right words.** This is especially important so you do not get in the way of the Holy Spirit working in your child.
- **For your child** to “not quench the Spirit” ([Thess 5:19](#)) as He is guiding him or her.
- **Trust God.** As moms we have to trust that God loves our children more than we do. We must believe that He has perfect plans for our children and so we must leave our children in His ever-capable ever-loving hands.
- **Don’t measure our worth as a mother on our children’s choices.** All children are prone to sin and make poor choices. We mommas cannot measure our worth on their choices, instead we have to cling to God and pray that He fills in the mistakes we made with His grace.

*Moms, let’s not be surprised by the choices of our children.
Let us trust God to work in all the choices our children make even
when those choices make our lives bitter. Sweet momma,
also remember those choices are not who you are as a mom.*

5. Resist the Urge to Manipulate

When life is barren and things are not going our way it is tempting to manipulate things. We think we know the way out of our barrenness or we know how to make things right. So we manipulate people or circumstances so things go the way we think they ought to go.

Read the follow verse and underline which child God said would serve and circle the child God said would be served.

*And the Lord said to her,
“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the older shall serve the younger.” Genesis 25:23 (ESV)*

Rebekah knew her older son, Esau, was to serve her younger son, Jacob. God had promised this would be so, but something happened to get in the way.

Read the following verses and underline the things Rebekah did.

“Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.’ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.” But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.” His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.” Genesis 27:5-13 (ESV)

So Rebekah stuck her nose and her ear where they did not belong. She heard her husband’s plan to give his blessing to Esau, the older son. The son Isaac loved, while Rebekah preferred Jacob. Have you ever overheard something you were not supposed to know? What did you do with that information? Did you pray for wisdom? Did you gossip? Did you try to use the information for your benefit?

Rebekah had some information and instead of talking with her husband or to God, she devised her own plan. A plan to manipulate her husband and hijack his blessing for her chosen son. I can hear Rebekah justifying her choices. “But God promised Esau would serve Jacob. Isaac wasn’t listening to God and so I had to do something.” Have you ever tried to “help God” work things out?

Read the verse below and underline where the way of man leads.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” Proverbs 16:25 (ESV)

So our plans may seem really great, but God tells us they lead to death. Rebekah’s plans led to her son getting the promise, but having to flee his family. And it appears that Rebekah never saw her son again.

Read the following verse and underline the effect of God's plans.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

This does not mean that all the things that happen in our lives will be easy or fun. Instead it means that all of God's plans will prosper our souls even if they do not prosper our physical bodies. All that happens in our lives happen so that we are made to look more like God, drawn closer to Him, and have the hope of heaven. So we can trust God even when the people in our lives are making choices we don't like. God doesn't need our help to make His purposes happen.

Read the following verse and circle whose purpose whose purpose stands.

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” Proverbs 19:21 (ESV)

Regardless of the plans of Isaac or Rebekah or Angela or you, God's purpose will prevail. This means we do not have to manipulate people or circumstances. It means we can trust God to work in our lives and the lives of our children. We can trust God's plans because they are for our good and we can know that His purpose will prevail.

Moms, we can learn a lot from Rebekah. First we need **trust God** to meet us in our barrenness (physical, emotional, or spiritual). We must **ask God for wisdom** when life is not turning out the way we thought. We ought to **avoid favoritism** and do the work of developing rewarding relationships with our children.

Our children's choices ought to never be the soil we root our identity in. Instead we need to **firmly root our identity in Christ**. Finally we need to **trust God** to bring about His purposes and **not manipulate** things to attempt to get our own way.

What do you need to work on as a mom? Are you struggling to trust God? Do you need wisdom? Are you beginning to fall down the slippery slope of favoritism? Have you been placing your identity in your children's choices (be they “good” or “bad”)? Perhaps you have been manipulating circumstances to bring about your desires when instead it is time to let go and trust God?

MATRIARCHS

WHAT GOD'S WORD IS SAYING TO ME: _____

HOW I CAN APPLY IT TO MY LIFE: _____

PRAY ABOUT IT: Father God help me to trust You in barren times and in bountiful times. I am a broken sinful woman who needs wisdom for the best way to mother my children. Give me words to say, help me to manipulate circumstances. Guard my heart from developing favoritism. Father I want to root my identity in Christ alone and not in the fragile choices of my children. Help me to cling to who You say I am, give me the strength to be that woman, and help me to trust You in all circumstances. May this all happen for Your glory and honor in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

