

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: Twelve

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Biblical Mom: Herodias

Title of Lesson: The Self-Centered User

Key Passage: Matthew , Mark 6:14-29

Key Influence: Mother of James and John

Video Link: Coming Soon

HERODIAS: The Self-Centered User

I did not want to write about Herodias. She was my last choice. I would have gladly taken Sarah or Naomi or Mary. Any mother other than *this* mother. But I waited too late to volunteer. Herodias was the only mother left. Apparently no one else wanted to write about her either.

After all, what we could learn about mothering from Herodias? Scripture doesn't say one nice thing about her. We don't see even one redeeming quality. Only negative. Yep, that's definitely the study I wanted to sign up for.

Then I realized God had something to teach me – and you – in this story of a self-absorbed mother who used her child as a means to an end. While none of us

likely come close to rivaling this totally self-centered user, we can study Herodias as an example of what NOT to do.

Herodias probably used all the people in her life to get what she wanted. She used men to get power. And she used her daughter to get revenge on her enemy. Unfortunately, even the best and most godly mothers can fall into the role of “self-centered user” from time to time.

Things like fleshly desires, ambition, and even old hurts rise up and before we know it, we find ourselves selfishly using our children. Here are four possible scenarios we must guard ourselves against:

1. **Using our kids as a trophy** – This is the ultimate “keeping up with the Joneses.” We long for our son to be the star football player or for our daughter to be the class valedictorian. So we encourage, push, and maybe even scold to get them there. And why? Is it for their good? Maybe partly. But often it’s to feed our own egos. So we can say, “Well, my son did this... or my daughter succeeded at that...”
2. **Using our kids as a substitute** – We all have unfulfilled ambitions from our childhood. That’s not a failing, that’s just life. However, sometimes we parents think we can live out that dream through our children. So we push them to achieve what we didn’t.
3. **Using our kids as a tool** – Sometimes parents use their kids to do their “dirty work.” For instance, if I don’t want to talk to the person on the phone I may tell my son to tell them I’m not home. Whether out of laziness, guilt, or avoidance, we’ve all been guilty of using our kids to do something we don’t want to do – or even shouldn’t do - ourselves.
4. **Using our kids as a weapon** – Have you ever used your child as a “go between” when you were angry at your spouse? Some divorces get so difficult that one spouse will even withhold the children from the other as a way to cause pain. From little hurts to big, any of us could fall to the temptation to use our children as a weapon.

Today's matriarch, Herodias, was the ultimate self-centered user. She used her daughter as both a tool and a weapon to further her own agenda. Herodias' story in the Bible is brief, but it reads like a movie plot. But before we dive into the story, let's meet the main characters.

The Characters

Herod Antipas - Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was the "tetrarch" of Galilee and Perea in Israel. Far from an autonomous ruler, Antipas and two of his brothers – Philip and Archelaus – each governed one-third of their father's former kingdom under the authority of the Roman emperor.

Herodias- Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, daughter of Antipas' brother Aristobulus, and niece of Antipas. Originally married to Philip, Antipas stole her away from his brother, then divorced his own wife and married Herodias.

John the Baptist - Jesus' cousin John was a godly, "tell it like it is" evangelist. He was the precursor to Jesus who called the people to repentance and pointed them to the promised Messiah.

Salome - This isn't the same Salome you learned about in last week's MATRIARCHS study. This is Salome #1. She was the daughter of Herodias and Philip. She was probably about 12 to 14 years old when our story took place.

The Plot

Read Mark 6:14-29.

Our story would be considered a movie flashback scene. When Herod Antipas heard about Jesus' miracles and authoritative teaching, he was reminded of John the Baptist and the role he had played in his death. He thought surely Jesus was John the Baptist back from the dead! It is here that Scripture takes us back to explain why Herod Antipas was fearful. He had not only imprisoned John, but he had also allowed his wife Herodias to manipulate him to put John to death. But why?

During John's ministry, he had repeatedly called Herod to repentance by rebuking him for his many sins. But the real trouble started with one specific rebuke.

Reread Mark 6:17-20. Why did Antipas have John arrested?

Thought-provoking question: Why do you think Herodias wanted John dead so badly?

Herodias did not want to change her ways. And she didn't want anyone else to point out her sin. She wanted to live for herself and live the way she wanted, without answering to anyone. Including God.

If we are completely honest with ourselves, each of us has probably clung to some sin we didn't want to give up. We may have even tried to silence a "rebuke" or manipulate circumstances to keep it "hidden."

Reflection question: Can you think of a time you clung to something you knew God wanted you to turn away from? How did that turn out?

Why did Herod refuse to give Herodias everything she wanted?

John had boldly and repeatedly pointed out Herod's sin with Herodias. It was against God's moral law for him to have his brother's wife (Leviticus 18:16 and Leviticus 20:21). Herodias wanted John silenced – permanently. Herod imprisoned John trying to pacify her, but knowing John was a righteous man of God, Herod refused to have him executed.

So Herodias watched and waited. She knew her opportunity would come and when it did she would get what she wanted. Herodias was a master manipulator and she would use whatever means necessary. Including her daughter.

Reread Mark 6:21-25 and compare it to Matthew 14:6-12. Do you see anything new?

What was the occasion Herodias found to carry out her plot?

Let's do some "reading between the lines." We could easily assume that Herodias was a bit player in this scene. But considering what we know about her, how do you think she was really involved? How did she manipulate things to her advantage?

Soon the "opportune time" arrived. Herod threw himself a big party for his birthday. This shindig was guys only, more like a rowdy stag party than a simple birthday dinner. The form of the biblical texts even suggest Herodias staged the whole thing by sending her young daughter Salome in to dance provocatively for a room full of intoxicated men.

When Salome's dancing pleased Herod, he boastfully promised something he didn't even have the power to give – "up to half my kingdom!"

This was the moment Herodias had been waiting for and she pounced on it. She used her daughter and even her husband Herod to accomplish what Herod had prevented – the death of John the Baptist.

Salome knew to take Herod's offer straight to her mother. With her desire finally realized, she sent Salome back, prompted by her mother's selfish wishes.

“I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

In Matthew 14:8, we are told that Salome was “prompted” by her mother. This Greek word, *probibazo*, means “to lead forward, lead on.” The request for John's head on a platter may have come from Salome's mouth, but the evil desire came from the selfish heart of Herodias. Herodias led her daughter into wickedness and used her as a weapon to exact revenge on John the Baptist.

Sadly, Herod saw no way of escape. He had made a reckless promise in front of “high officials, military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.” To withdraw his offer would mean personal humiliation. And Herodias knew that too. That was part of her plan. The self-centered user got exactly what she wanted.

How did Herodias become this self-centered user?

First, let's consider how Herodias became this self-centered user. She came from a long line of manipulative, selfish people. More than likely her selfishness began when she saw it modeled in her own family.

Read Matthew 2:13-18. What cruel act did Herodias' grandfather, Herod the Great, carry out shortly after Jesus was born?

Herod the Great carried out this atrocity in a paranoid effort to hang on to his throne. He felt threatened by the promised Messiah. We also know from history

that Herod the Great ordered the murder of many of his wives and children as well. Caesar Augustus once said it would be safer to be Herod's pig than a member of his family.

Sadly, his son Archelaus learned from his father. After the death of Herod the Great, Archelaus ruled Palestine. But Archelaus was so brutal, Augustus removed him and banished him in AD 6. In fact, Archelaus was the reason Joseph was warned in a dream not to settle in Judea when the family returned to Israel from Egypt (Matthew 2:19-23).

How do you think Herodias' family history impacted her character and behavior?

How do you think Herodias' character and behavior impacted Salome?

Scripture does not tell us that Salome made any objection to her mother's plan. Perhaps she had already learned a thing or two about how to get her way by watching Herodias. *Note to ourselves: Always remember that our kids are watching us too!*

What can we learn from Herodias?

I'm sure none of us have used our child as a murder weapon. But we have all *used our children* to one degree or another. Maybe we pushed them in the direction *we* wanted them to go. Maybe we asked them to stretch the truth for our convenience. But we all sometimes act selfishly and our children get caught up in the consequences.

Our actions, attitudes, and motives will affect our kids.

Our character and behavior will at least partly shape their character and behavior. The results of what we do will also land on them.

Now's the time to get real personal. How do you think your character and behavior impacts your own children?

Ask God to show you any actions, words, or attitudes in your life that negatively affects your children. Record what He shows you.

Now ask God to show you things you can do now to help shape your children to be more like Jesus. Record what He shows you.

Proactive parenting steps we learned from Herodias

I really want to end this study on a positive note.

1. Remember that your child is individually valued by God. God has specific plans and purposes for your child that are different from the ones He has for you. Help your child discover his unique purpose!
2. Ask God to make you sensitive to any behavior that is selfishly motivated. Then repent immediately!
3. Purposefully model Christ-like character and godly behavior for your children.

What other proactive parenting steps did you learn from Herodias?

Close by asking God to help you implement these in your life!

WHAT GOD'S WORD IS SAYING TO ME: _____
