

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: Eleven

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Biblical Mom: Salome

Title of Lesson: You Take the Good, You Take the Bad

Key Passage: Matthew 20:20-24, 27:56, Mark 15 - Mark 16:2

Key Influence: Mother of James and John

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rCaZUAkvZ8>

SALOME: You Take the Good, You Take the Bad

I'm a homeschooling stay at home mom. Every day I am hustling to get everything done. A few of my daily jobs are: mom, teacher, chef, housekeeper, laundress, personal shopper, secretary, accountant, entertainer, wife, lover, and writer. The list could probably go on.

I bet you have a dozen other things you could add.

Do you work? You could add employee, boss, or a whole list of others. I love my jobs. I have no doubt that at this point in my life, this is what God put me on the planet to do. But that doesn't mean I don't sometimes feel overlooked.

It's easy, as a mother, to feel like our efforts are not really getting anywhere. We work hard every day in the background without pay and most of the time without any recognition. The majority of our lives are lived in obscurity, but obscurity doesn't equal unimportant.

Obscurity doesn't equal unimportant.

Ponder This:

Do you ever struggle with feeling like your life roles are unimportant? _____

Salome was a mother who worked diligently in the background to teach her children to love the Lord and eventually gave a huge contribution to our Christian faith – the apostles James and John. You probably haven't heard her name before, at least I had not.

You may not know her *name*, but you do know her. You know her as the mother of James and John, The Sons of Thunder, who came to Jesus and asked if her two sons could sit on his right and left hand when he came into his kingdom. Ringing a bell now? It takes a little cross-referencing to find her name, but it is there.

Some women in the Bible have long narratives to tell their stories, but others are only mentioned once or twice even if they have a significant impact on the gospel story. Just because someone is relatively unknown doesn't make him or her insignificant. History has shown us that time and time again. Salome is one of those women.

We have only three recorded accounts of her life...

1. **Matthew 20:20-24; 27:56** when she asks Jesus to let her sons sit on his right and left side in the coming kingdom.
2. **Mark 15:40-41** – when she was present at the crucifixion with the ladies who followed and ministered to him.

3. **Mark 16:1-2** – when she is with the ladies who discover the tomb is empty and are visited by the angel.

We can, however, read between the lines of her life just from the few things we do know about her. We know that she was the wife of Zebedee, a wealthy fisherman. We know she was a Godly mother who taught her children well because they were *more than* willing to leave the boat when Jesus called to them. We know she was very human; doing what she thought was best and sometimes overstepping her boundaries.

Ponder This:

Does this remind you of yourself? Do you ever feel like you are working hard as a mom to do your best, but you're unsure if the decisions you are making are the right ones?

There is quite a bit of debate about this subject, but many scholars agree that she may have been the sister of Mary based on **John 19:25** where it reads: “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, **his mother’s sister**, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” (emphasis mine). In Mark 15:40 this same account uses the name Salome instead of “his mother’s sister”. This would have made her Jesus’ aunt and would make Jesus the cousin of James and John.

This is a part of the gospel story that I have never considered and really gave me something to think through. If she were Mary’s sister then she would have been a witness to the entire narrative of Jesus’ birth. She would have known about the scorn from other people, the disbelief in what Joseph and Mary told people about the conception, and the faith of her sister in this out of the ordinary ordeal.

She would have been teaching her children to one day grow up and follow her nephew, the Messiah. Did she know that? I wonder if she knew all along? Did she notice a difference in Jesus when their kids played together?

Surely it was noticeable that he was the only one not talking back or disobeying....

Either way, sister or not, we know that she was a faithful worshipper of God who was awaiting the Messiah and had taught her children this as well. James and John were so quick to jump out of the boat when Jesus called them that you know they were ready, willing, even possibly waiting for this moment to come. Their mother had taught them faithfully.

When stepping back to look at the life of Salome, there are two lessons I think we can glean from her as mothers trying to raise our children to love the Lord. And, just like us, there are some good lessons and some bad ones to learn from her life.

You take the good, you take the bad...

1. She raised her children to follow the Lord and then released them to do it.
2. She was ambitious for her children.

She Raised Her Children to Follow the Lord

Salome was a great example of a mother who raised her children in the Lord and then released them to do what God had for them. We know from the bits and pieces of the gospel narrative that she must have agreed with their decision to follow Jesus because not only did she send them out, but she went as well. She appears to have been a disciple from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. She encouraged God's call in their life, and followed his call in her own.

Isn't this what we all desire to be as mothers? I want very much for my life to be an example to my children in following where God leads. She did not come to God praying for her children with a life-plan already in mind, she came with open hands. This is something I'm learning as a mother, to pray for my children with open hands. What does HE want for them, not what do I want for them.

Ponder This:

When you pray for your children, are you praying with a playbook in hand asking God to bless your plans, or are you praying with open hands to receive HIS plans for them?

Not only was she willing to let her sons follow Jesus, she was willing to leave all that she had and go as well. What an example! This was a faithful mother.

Are you a good example to your children in going where God leads you? _____

She Was Ambitious For Her Children

Why is it that we can have one thousand great shining moments and they fade into the distance in comparison to that one time that we completely blow it? I feel like this is what happened in history to Salome. Because it takes cross referencing to figure it out, I think people don't usually equate her with being a follower of Jesus, being at the crucifixion, or even being one of the ones at the tomb that was visited by the angel who announced the resurrection.

Nope, she's remembered as the mother who just didn't get the concept of the kingdom and was overly ambitious for her boys.

In Matthew 20:20-24 we find the most well known passage about this mother - when Salome approaches Jesus with a request. She kneels at Jesus' feet and asks him if he will grant that her two sons will sit at his right and left side when he comes into his kingdom. This request seems to come just as much from *them* as it does from her, as they are quick to jump in with a resounding "We are able" when Jesus asks if they can drink the same cup he does.

We don't know her motivation behind the request. It seems that the most widely viewed idea is that she was overly ambitious for her children. She thought her kids were the best suited for the job and wanted to make sure Jesus knew it. We need to be reminded that she isn't talking about a heavenly kingdom, she isn't asking if they can sit on his right and left on the heavenly throne. This is not an audacious claim that her sons can be divine like Jesus. No, she like all the others still has an earthly kingdom mindset.

Jesus' reply gently lets her down. He tells her that she doesn't understand what she is asking for, and he's right. Even after all that Jesus has taught them, they still have an earthly kingdom concept where he will be a ruler sitting on a throne.

Even the ones closest to Jesus, who followed him and ministered to him, still didn't completely understand what was coming. They were on their way up to Jerusalem and had an expectancy of coming triumph. They were looking forward to the establishment of an earthly kingdom and the crowning of a conquering ruler. Her request was basically the same as asking for her sons to be the Vice President and Chief of Staff when Jesus is soon ushered into the Presidency.

It may have been a misguided request, but it's something we all as mothers can relate to: ambition for our kids to have the best. Our society has led us to believe that if we don't give our kids the best of everything or make sure that they have all the best opportunities that we are failing them as parents. Our ambition for our children, loving or not, might not be what is best for them.

Ponder This:

Do you struggle with feeling like you have to make sure your children have all the best things and the best opportunities in order to be a good parent? _____

As a family that works with college students, we constantly deal with students who have been given everything they wanted and helped so much along the way that they don't know how to function in the real world. Loving parents have tried to give their children a stress-free, enjoyable childhood that eventually causes them to crack under the pressure of real world responsibilities.

I know I do it all the time. My ambition for my children causes my judgment to become clouded as to what my children need at that particular moment and what they don't. And just as Jesus lovingly teaches Salome, he may be telling us that what we want for our children is not ultimately going to lead where we think it will.

Salome wanted power and influence for them when in reality it would lead to pain and death.

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We, as mothers, need to learn to come to Jesus with requests for *his* will for our children's lives – not with our own ambitions.

I see myself in Salome. I'll bet you do, too.

We, as mothers, are trying our hardest to lead our children to love the Lord, to follow His way for their life, and (as hard as it can be) to release them to do what He has called them to do. Sometimes in the midst of that "trying" we screw up. We forget to ask God what he wants for our kids, and instead think we know what's best. I'm so thankful that Jesus lovingly reminds us that we don't know what we're asking for. He knows what is best for our kids, not us.

I pray that we can all learn to be more like this real life example of a mother who faithfully leads her children to follow the Lord, and be encouraged that even the best mothers mess up sometimes.

WHAT GOD'S WORD IS SAYING TO ME: _____

HOW I CAN APPLY IT TO MY LIFE: _____

MEMORY VERSE:

