

Mother's Day 2013: The Story of Four Mothers and the Biblical Implications

by Doug Hamilton

In preparation of the sermon this week, I ended up changing the entire lesson. I had a sermon outline prepared, but a certain current event in the news forced me to come up with another theme. This morning's lesson is titled "*The Story of Four Mothers and the Biblical Implications*".

Mother #1) Louwana Miller

It was a beautiful clear Spring day in Cleveland, Ohio on May 2, 2006. People were playing in the parks with their children, riding to work with their windows down and just trying to enjoy the nice weather.



Not every Cleveland resident was having a great day; 43 year-old Louwana Miller was dying of heart failure in the Lakewood Hospital. The young mother of two was leaving this life at an early age because her heart had been broken. Something horrific altered her life in a way that no mother should ever have to go through. Three years prior, on April 21, 2003, she was shopping in the stores for her daughter Amanda's seventeenth birthday. She was planning to surprise her with the gifts the following day, but Amanda never came home from her part-time job that night. Louwana waited and waited. She was worried when Amanda did not come home so she phoned the police and a city-wide search was carried out, yet she was not found.

Hours turned into days, days into months, months into years. Louwana tried everything she could to find out what happened to her daughter, but to no avail. She went on the television shows, worked with the police, hung posters of her missing daughter and followed-up with every lead. She never found her. Was she dead? Did she run away? Was she kidnapped? She cried herself to sleep every night, calling out to God to find her daughter. Nothing could console her, for her heart was broken.

In a sterile hospital room three years after Amanda went missing, the anguish had taken a the greatest toll on her health. The stress had overwhelmed her in every way. A mother's heart was failing due to the stress of losing a daughter to unknown factors. Though it was a beautiful day outside her window, she took her last breath and went to her grave with enormous grief. She was a mother that died of a broken heart, both literally and figuratively.

Mother #2) Amanda Berry

Amanda Berry was a young 16 year old girl. She was just leaving her job from Burger King just like thousands of other teenagers that day, except that night she did not make the ten minute walk home because someone offered her a ride home. She was kidnapped and taken to a house at 2207 Seymour Avenue in Cleveland, the home of a demented pervert. He locked her up in along with two other kidnap victims, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight. For the next decade, the three young women would be held prisoners in the basement, repeatedly abused sexually, emotionally and physically. Four years into Amanda's living hell, she conceived a child with her perpetrator,

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carried the baby for nine months and gave birth to a daughter on Christmas Day. Though she was still imprisoned, she determined to do the best for her daughter Jocelyn. She nursed her, fed her, held her as the years went by and the child grew. She even began to secretly home-school Jocelyn when the her captor was not there. She vowed to herself that someday the opportunity would come that her and Jocelyn could make their escape.

Mother #3) Nancy Ruiz

April 2, 2004, Nancy Ruiz gave her daughter, 14 year old Georgina, \$1.25 to take the short bus home after school. She looked out for her daughter with extra care since a neighborhood girl named Amanda went missing less than a year prior. Georgina was very friendly and wanted a classmate, Arlene Castro, to come home with her that day to hang out. Georgina loaned 50 cents of her bus money to Arlene to call her mother to ask for permission. Arlene was denied to do so by her mother and simply walked home. Ironically Miss Castro was the daughter of the kidnapper and the last person to see her alive. Since Georgina did not have enough money to catch the bus home, she started walking home.



Her mother Nancy waited at the bus stop only to discover that she never took the bus. When a couple of hours passed, she called the school and then the police. Instead of tucking her daughter into bed that night, she frantically drove through the neighborhoods, calling out her daughter's name and hoping it was just a nightmare. She tried everything in her power to find her daughter, but only found dead ends. Her prayers and tears to God every night for more than nine years never left her without hope. When others said that Georgina was likely dead, Nancy determined she was going to hold her daughter once again in her arms.

Mother #4) Lillian Rodriguez

At a home in the Puerto Rico Territory in 1960, a young mother was in labor and about to give birth. Her name was Lillian Rodriguez. For nine months she carried the unborn child full-term and in a few moments would be holding yet another son to add to the family. As she held him proudly in her arms, announcing that his name would be Ariel, named for one of the seven arch-angels of the tradition of her faith. She viewed the child as a blessing from God.

They did the best they could to raise him in the poverty of Puerto Rico, but eventually moved to the US and settled in Cleveland, Ohio for a new start. There Ariel would grow up, go to school, meet a spouse and bring forth grandkids to bless his mother Lillian. She stuck by him when his marriage ended in divorce because of his drunken violence against his wife.

As the years went by, Ariel's curious behaviors, like not having family over or never leaving town for more than a day, seemed strange, but dismissed as "That was just Ariel". Lillian still loved her son just the same, for he had some good qualities. He drove school bus because he

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loved children. He would take care of her car when it needed work. He even would participate in rallies of families to find the missing girls of the community. He was a good son, just like she raised him.

On May 6th of 2013 that all changed. News reports circulated around the world focusing on their neighborhood in Cleveland. A young lady named Amanda Berry escaped from a house with her daughter. Her captor had gone out for something and accidentally left a door unlocked. With the assistance of a passerby, she kicked and punched through the bottom of the front door, ran across the street and placed a call to the police. She told them that she had been held captive for more than a decade. In a few minutes the police were there. A determined mother had not only freed her daughter and herself, but also the other two kidnap victims. Amanda and her daughter were finally free from the control of a twisted pervert.



The news spread through the neighborhood and it was finally revealed that Lillian's son was the kidnapper. Ariel had committed one of the most horrific crimes in American history. She was in shock, thinking about what could have happened to cause such a monster. The boy she was once proud of caused her to be surrounded by reporters wanting to know more about her twisted Ariel. This was the most shameful time of her life. Her son, named for one of the arch-angels turned out to be more like the fallen angel Lucifer.



"I have a son who is sick, who has committed something serious," an overwrought Lillian Rodriguez told reporters outside another son's home. "I am sorry for what my son has done." A weepy Rodriguez also expressed her sorrow to the mothers of the three women who told authorities they were starved, beaten and raped while held hostage in Castro's Cleveland home. "I ask for forgiveness from those mothers, that the girls will forgive me," she said in Spanish. She lowered her head in shame.

Amanda Berry and the other girls were taken to the hospital. Though her mother Louwana Miller had passed for nearly seven years, not knowing what happened to her, she was reunited with her sister and joyfully presented Jocelyn her beautiful daughter. They wept and held each other for hours because her nightmare was over.



Nancy Ruiz, who had not seen her daughter for more than nine years, received a call from the police that she had been found. She rushed to the hospital with the family and was led to her room. Summarizing an ABC interview, "*We just grabbed each other and held on. There were no words - just hugging and kissing and crying,*" Ruiz said. *The ongoing whirlwind of emotions comes just in time for Mother's Day Sunday, which Ruiz said has been every day for her since Gina was rescued. "I am so blessed and so thankful," Ruiz said. "I always felt she would walk through my front door."* (From Channel Five News in Cleveland - Friday May 10, 2013)

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I think we all agree in unison to say, "Enjoy your Mother's Day gift from God, Mrs. Ruiz. Enjoy her and don't ever let go, just like a mother should do."

Four Mothers:

We have just covered four mothers joined together by a common tragedy. One mother died not united with her child, another fought with all her might to save her child, another was united with her daughter in the end and the last one was a mother incredibly ashamed of her own son.

Application:

From what we have covered of the events that unfolded in the last decade and in particular, the last week, I would like to summarize four Biblical points from the Holy Scriptures that we need to reflect upon.

1) God's creative design for mothers is awesome.

Genesis 2:18-22 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.²² The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

- I do not know if you have thought about this or not, but of all the creatures originally put on this earth, it was Eve only that God fashioned from a different source. She did not come from the dust of the earth, but from the rib of man. Eve, the name meaning "the mother of all living", became just that. God did not design human beings to lay eggs in the sand like a reptile, leaving them to hatch, but to carry the child inside her for nine months. From conception to birth, some amazing bonding takes place among the baby and the mother.
 - From day one, when the egg is fertilized, the hormones of the woman begins to shift.
 - By week seven, the mother can begin to feel the fluttering of the baby as he begins to kick and swim.
 - By month 2 the baby can begin to hear the mothers voice and by month 5 he recognizes her voice quite uniquely as hers.
 - In months five and six the mother can feel regular movements in the womb, including hiccups.
 - In months 7 to 9 the baby can now relate to the moods of the mother and begins to mimic her sleeping patterns.
 - By the time the baby is born, he shares many of the moods, the senses and emotions of the mother.

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- The bonding pattern continues through the nursing, being held close to the mothers face, memorizing her image in his mind. The first clear images in his eyes are of her; she sees his first smiles; together they adore each other.
- The bond between a mother and child is so strong because that was how God designed it in creation, and it is awesome. Mothers of every generation, from Eve to the mothers today, were designed by God to be connected to their children.

2) A mother's life is filled with sacrifice.

- From carrying the child in her body, through morning sickness, body changes, waking up at night all the way to the pain of delivery, mom makes some great sacrifices.
- Unlike many of the mammals in the animal kingdom that are birthed and soon are brought to maturity, mothers of humans will care for their young for at least a couple of decades. From nursing, changing diapers, reading books, taking them to church to just tucking them in at night. there is much to do. Proverbs 31 is filled with these many sacrifices that the mother makes for her children. When these are done, *then Her children rise up and bless her (Prov 31:28)*. A mother's life is filled with sacrifices

3) You have the duty to honor your mother.

- Proverbs 10:1 A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
- Proverbs 17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father And bitterness to her who bore him.
- Ephesians 6:2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise)
- We have an obligation from God to honor our parents, and in particular to this lesson, our mothers. For the most part, we have good mothers. They are not perfect, but they generally love you more than anyone else on earth. Don't ever forget to honor her.

4) Someday your mother will be gone.

- In Genesis 24:67 it states "*Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*" The primary thrust of the text is Isaac and Rebekah becoming a new family. On the other hand, he had recently lost his mother Sarah and was still suffering from her loss. He missed his mother.
- Every mother, from Eve until today and off into the future, will go the way of the grave someday. Take the time to let her know of your appreciation of her. No matter how much she loves you and wants to be there for you, the odds are she will leave through death.
- Take the time every time and let her know of your appreciation of her. Really make sure she knows of your appreciation. Don't live in regret, but appreciation.