

WHAT'S *SHE*
DOING HERE?

THE MESSY WOMEN IN JESUS'S GENEALOGY

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Although many publishers do not capitalize terms, and particularly pronouns, which refer to the Trinity, in this study CDM publications has capitalized those elements for clarity of reference.

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Visit the web site www.pcacdm.org/messy for video content and more.

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How to Use This Study

In years of teaching Bible studies, my favorite question I've ever been asked is, "Can I come to your study even if I don't have a Bible?" The answer? "Yes! And, by the way, I've got an extra Bible I'd love to give you." As you begin *What's SHE Doing Here?* I hope you will buy a Bible, dust off a Bible, or grab your Bible off your bedside table and join us as we learn about God's character and Jesus's "messy mamas." And since many women like to travel light or use a Bible app, the scripture passages for each chapter are also printed in the back.

What's SHE Doing Here? is written for individual or small group use. You can watch the videos supplied by CDM (www.pcacdm.org/messy), or your local church may want a "live" teacher while using this book to prompt study beforehand and discussion after the lectures. I've found that I learn better when I learn alongside someone else. A term we will discuss in the pages ahead is covenant. It is shorthand in the Bible for how God relates to His people. The *covenant community* is your spiritual family. One of the ways women grow in their faith is to spend time with other women who love God. Studying God's Word with other believers not only increases your wisdom for living, but also cultivates more relationship ties as no one can do life alone. So, identify a nearby co-worker, a new girl at school, or another mom in the neighborhood and ask her if she'd like to meet once a week to discuss this book and the Bible passages included. Or gather a group of friends in your dorm or church. Consider intentionally including women who may not be invited to many Bible studies.

Hearing the Bible taught and then discussing implications of His Word for our lives is a great way to learn. If you are leading a small group discussion, congrats on being brave! Every excuse from "I don't know my Bible well enough" to "I don't have time to prepare" keeps smart, capable, and caring women from leading other women through the Bible.

If you are leading a church or community Bible study, suggestions for doing so are in the back (p. 142). These tips include praying to understand the passages, sharing how those scriptures impact your daily living, and creating accountability for applying God's Word to your season of life. Also included in the back (p. 145) is space to keep up with prayer requests, whether they are your own or requests from your group members.

If you are part of a group or if you are studying alone, find a space to pray, asking God's Spirit to help you understand what you are reading in His Word, the Bible. Then, read a chapter, answering the questions along the way. Consider keeping a journal as you have thoughts or questions for further study. If you want to memorize scripture as part of this study, suggested passages are included as well as downloadable pages to print on the website (www.pcacdm.org/messy).

Each chapter of this study is broken into three sections: Her Story, God's Story, and Your Story. The study is written for women who want to open their Bibles yet cannot spend hours each week on a Bible study. Working through each chapter should take no longer than two hours per week, including the video lesson or podcast (www.pcacdm.org/messy). You may take just a few minutes each day to work through one section of a chapter, or she may take on all three sections in one sitting. It is up to you! Room is provided in each chapter for journaling thoughts, jotting down questions, or just writing out prayers as God's Word moves you. If your interest is piqued and you want to learn more about God's story, check out the resources for further study in the back of the book.

Her Story

Each woman we read about was a real person. She had to find something to wear every morning, and she crashed into bed at the end of her long day. God saw her story from start to finish (Ps. 139:16), and He guided her, protected her, provided for her, and accomplished His plans for her life (Jer. 1:5). He knew how many hairs she brushed everyday (Matt. 10:30).

God's Story

Although God is intimately involved in His daughters' lives, He is also weaving their stories into His Big story. He takes all the pearls of their stories and other Bible stories and strings them together into a beautiful necklace. Some call this pearl necklace His covenant with His people; the plot of His Big Story is to make us His special people (1 Peter 2:9). As a God who pursues, He is also a God who orchestrates a story of salvation for many. Nothing skews His plotline, not even our stories of failure and weakness (Isa. 14:27).

God used our study's five ordinary women to accomplish an extraordinary redemption of His creation and His people. And, throughout the chapters you will see what I like to call Bible Lagniappe. Growing up in Mississippi, I often heard the term *lagniappe*, "a little something extra." Look out for the Bible Lagniappe sprinkled throughout the study to connect the dots of each woman's story to the bigger story of the Bible.

Your Story

God continues to string pearls on His beautiful necklace of redemption. Your life is one of His pearls. From stay-at-home moms to CEOs, from bus drivers to Air Force pilots, women's stories vary, and so does the way God uses their gifts, experiences, and obedience to execute His plans for our world. You may feel like your story is mundane, the same laundry day after day. Perhaps you are lonely when you see couples dine out as you eat in a booth alone. You may feel isolated among friends based on your background or even the color of your skin. You may even want to push back on the term "messy." Whether you are insecure or proud about the way you are living your life, God's story supersedes yours (Isa. 55:8-9). While this truth can be jarring in a culture that emphasizes our individuality and independence, it can also bring comfort—there is meaning in and beyond the circumstances of our stories (Rom. 8:28).

I hope you enjoy knowing the five women of Matthew 1. More importantly, I want you to know their God as your own and

to learn more about God's Big Story as you study theirs. And as you do, see how their God of justice, mercy, and love meets you in the personal details of life while saving an entire world. One messy story at a time.

Let's Get Started

Here is an idea of what to do, when . . .

- Pray for wisdom to understand God's Word you will be reading.
- Read a chapter of *What's SHE Doing Here?* and work through the questions. In the margins, jot down questions or new truths you may want to bring up to your small group.
- Watch the video or listen to the podcast (www.pcacdm.org/messy), whether individually or as a group.
- Attend your small group discussion (or flip through those questions on your own). Practice memory work if that is a personal or group goal.
- Close in individual prayer or share prayer requests with your group. Pray for those needs between small group meetings.

Beyond the Study

Covenant Community

Making friends through Bible study can present further opportunities for accountability and encouragement. Consider ways to build relationships with the women in your group outside your regular meetings.

#HerVoice

Depending on how much time you have for small group discussion, take turns asking individual women to come prepared to share a five-minute story from their lives and how it applies to what you are learning in this study. Or if that is too scary, consider asking a woman to come prepared to answer the ice breaker question that kicks off the group's discussion that day.

Be on the Lookout

As leaders we must always be looking for the next woman to replace us. As you listen to discussion, be sensitive to those who exhibit potential to lead the next group, perhaps to be a teacher herself, or to organize a conference or mercy ministry for your church. I would never have started teaching if not for my teacher giving me a fifteen-minute slot to “practice teach” at my Bible study and her words of “Well done!” afterwards.

End Together

Add a closing week to your Bible study schedule for all the groups to meet together to share ways this study impacted their view of other women, themselves, or God.

Throw A Party!

Every good thing has to end, but you can also end in a celebratory way. God’s people should throw the best parties because our God made all good things. This is a great time to include women who are good at organizing events or are gifted in hospitality or who know how to set a festive table. Celebrate what you’ve learned as a group and the new women you have met during this season.

Think Outside the Box

This study does not have to stick to the schedule given in the table of contents. Go to our webpage (www.pcacdm.org/messy) for helpful tools and a schedule template to plan a study tailor-made to your women’s schedules and needs. Be creative! Find a group of women and adapt the study schedule to work best with theirs. Perhaps your group cannot meet weekly, so you take a chapter each month and stretch it over the fall or spring. Consider asking an older woman and a friend to open their homes (and maybe an apartment complex’s pool) and co-lead a group of college girls for a summer study. Or, maybe you just include this *What’s SHE Doing Here?* as a book-of-the-month reading for your neighborhood book club. For women who cannot make it to a

group for various reasons, offer a virtual study including options for Zoom small groups. Check out www.pcacdm.org/messy for online resources.

Take Down Barriers

Ask your church to fund childcare if it is a moms' group. Consider meeting at a restaurant near your office complex so women can conveniently stop by for Bible study and dinner on the way home from work. If your group loves to exercise, plan a post-walk Bible study meeting in your sweatiest clothes, water bottles in tow. You can even discuss the questions as you walk!

Date	Lesson	Read Chapter	Primary Passages	Memory Work
	The Not So Fabulous Five	1	Matt. 1:1-17 Phil. 2:6-7	2 Cor. 5:17
	God's Story	2	Gen. 1-3 Rev. 21	Eph. 2:8-9
	The Desperate Daughter-in-Law	3	Gen. 38	Ps. 20:7
	The Career Prostitute	4	Joshua 2	John 14:6
	The Ultimate Outsider	5	The Book of Ruth	Ps. 91:14
	From Outsider to Ultimate Insider	6	The Book of Ruth	Ps. 62:11-12a
	The Queen of Messy	7	2 Sam. 11-12	Ps. 51:10
	The Unwed Teenage Mother	8	Luke 1:1-38	Prov. 3:5
	Magnificat!	9	Luke 1:46-55	Rom. 8:31-32

Introduction

When I was little, I remember waiting in the doctor's office. I lived in a small Mississippi farming community, and the office was simple but personal. On the wall was a large, framed portrait of Ruth, one of the women we will consider in this study. She looked so beautiful—serene, brunette, in pink Middle Eastern dress, gently cradling a bunch of barley. I guess it made me calm. After all, I was a brunette, too, and I wanted to be calm—especially waiting for a possible injection. I wanted to be attractive like the Ruth in the painting, waiting on my Boaz to marry me so I could quit working in a hot barley field.

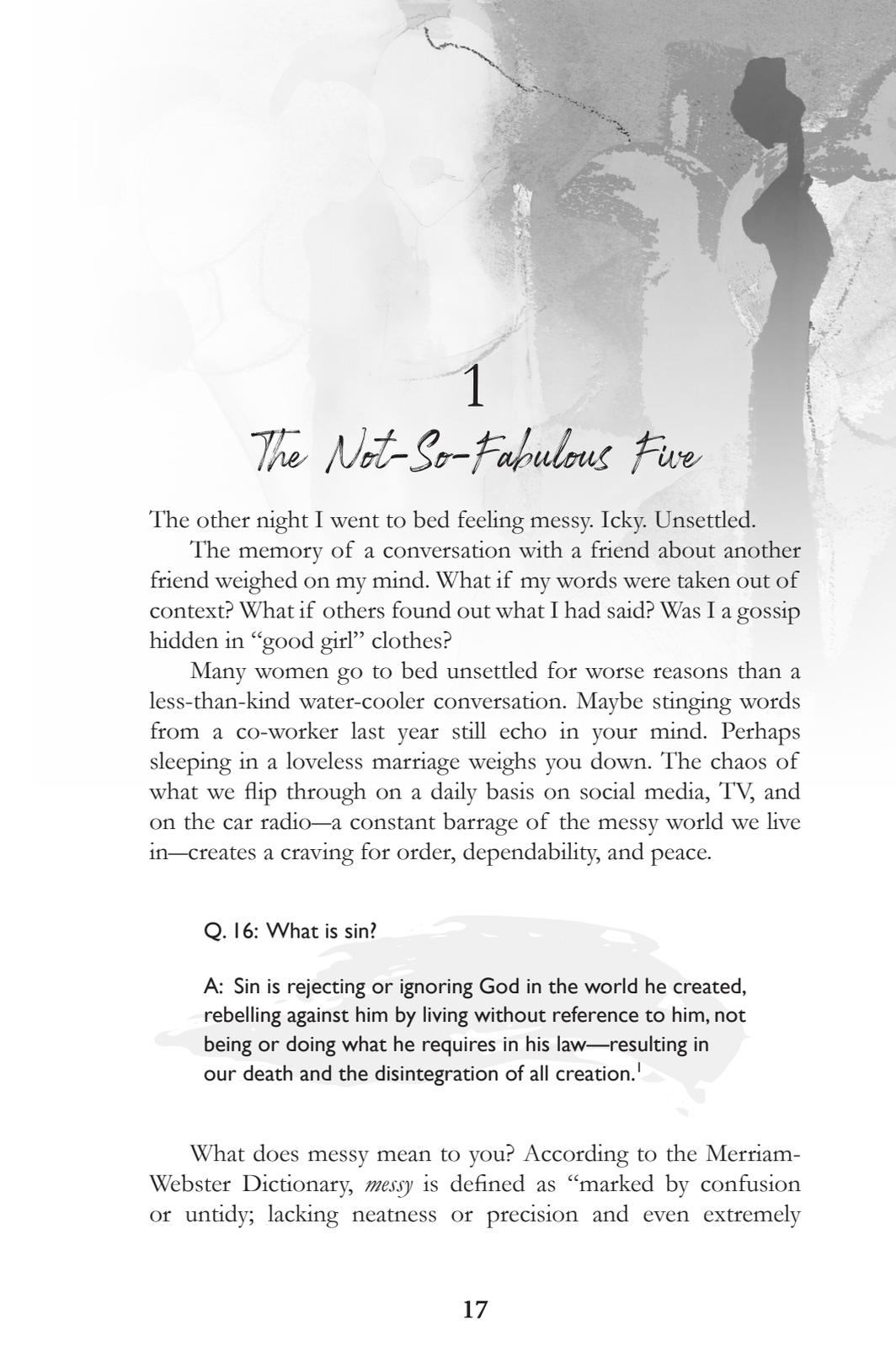
If the real Ruth, the one from the Bible, saw that office print, she would laugh! A young widow and recent immigrant to Bethlehem, Ruth is not even described as pretty. She lived with a grouchy mother-in-law and had to work in a dangerous field. That soft, flowing, Middle Eastern dress was probably stained with dust, smelling like a locker room.

Romanticized portraits of biblical women do not really offer much to women today. Not only are they sanitized accounts of who these women really were, but they put unrealistic expectations on us and lead us away from the truths God teaches us with their stories. God's purpose in our lives is not for us to be in that kind of framed print, looking all perfect and peaceful. The messiness of our lives reveals our need for the type of Savior we've been offered. God doesn't save women to Himself so they can hang on a wall. He saves them so they can sit at His table.



In this study we will look at the lives of the five women included in Jesus's genealogy in Matthew 1. I hope we will have a better understanding of why God included these particular

women in His family record, how He worked in their lives, and how He does the same in ours. In each chapter we will look at their stories, how their stories intersect with God's Big Story, and how the passages can affect our stories today. The chapters are broken up into three days of study and soul-searching, or you can work through the whole chapter in one sitting. The questions are meant for individual study or small group discussion.



1

The Not-So-Fabulous Five

The other night I went to bed feeling messy. Icky. Unsettled.

The memory of a conversation with a friend about another friend weighed on my mind. What if my words were taken out of context? What if others found out what I had said? Was I a gossip hidden in “good girl” clothes?

Many women go to bed unsettled for worse reasons than a less-than-kind water-cooler conversation. Maybe stinging words from a co-worker last year still echo in your mind. Perhaps sleeping in a loveless marriage weighs you down. The chaos of what we flip through on a daily basis on social media, TV, and on the car radio—a constant barrage of the messy world we live in—creates a craving for order, dependability, and peace.

Q. 16: What is sin?

A: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law—resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.¹

What does messy mean to you? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *messy* is defined as “marked by confusion or untidy; lacking neatness or precision and even extremely

unpleasant or trying.”²² Whether due to others’ sins, the normal brokenness of life, or just our own bad choices, our lives can look messy, and messy is an overwhelming place to be. This study hopes to show how the perfect and holy God sent a Savior who identifies with a messy people and gives us hope.

“God redeems us through and in His messy grace. It’s messy because God doesn’t free us from disappointment and struggle and suffering. He doesn’t free us as if though all our sins are going to go away magically, but His grace does deliver life, hope and mercy. There is true and real change in and through the grace that God brings when He meets us in that place of messy brokenness.”

—Tom Gibbs³

Day One: Her Story

Read Matthew 1:1-17.

1. List the five women included in Matthew’s genealogy:
2. This is the only gospel genealogy that includes women. Why do you think Matthew’s version does so?

Why these five women? Why not Sarah, the wife of Abraham? Leah, mother of Israel’s kings? Why did Matthew include women who experienced the messiness of neglect, abuse, poverty, and unexpected life changes? Most of us introduce our families with the remarkable members—those who thrive or are at least socially acceptable. We want to be associated

“God answers the mess of life with one word: Grace.”

—Max Lucado⁴

with the good people in our families and keep the others hidden. But Jesus, the only person who ever got to choose His family, doesn't hide the messes. He highlights them for all to see. He unashamedly says they're His.

The scripture references for the stories we know of these five women can be found in the chart that follows. Over this week's lesson, pick one or two of the passages to read each day and become acquainted with the women Matthew introduces. As you meet each woman in our study, try to put yourself in her shoes. How did it feel to be where she was? What would that look like today? We'll connect the dots to other stories God tells throughout Scripture and see how they're all pieces of His Story. Through looking at the lives of these five ladies, we hope to get a better look at God and how He interacts with His people.

“This act of helping ‘different’ women move from living with heads down to up is not new to us. God has exemplified it for us repeatedly in his Word.”

—Soojin Park⁵

- Over the next few days, read about our five women. Today, read the passages from Genesis and Joshua and fill in the chart below.

Her Name	Her Story	Her Messy Circumstances
	Gen. 38	
	Josh. 2, 6:22-25	
	Book of Ruth	
	2 Sam. 11:1-12:25	
	Luke 1:26-2:52	



Day Two: God's Story

1. Today, read the book of Ruth and fill in the corresponding information in the previous chart.

How can a holy God—a perfect God—and a messy people co-exist? Matthew's introduction of the much-anticipated Messiah, including a laundry list of messed-up men and women, gives us a clue. Christ's association with this litany of sinners shows exactly what kind of Messiah He is: a Savior who will get down in the mess alongside us. When my children were little and one of my kids got really dirty—maybe she vomited, or he had a really messy diaper—I had to get dirty in order to get them clean, right? As they cried and needed my help, I had to scoop them up, experiencing the stink too.

2. Read Philippians 2:6-7 (NIV). Circle or underline the words that stand out to you.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

A righteous Jesus loved us enough to scoop us up. He put Himself in a place to feel fatigue, to feel bullied, to even feel death to save us from our messy choices, messy world, and messy hearts. He could not—nor did He want to—save us from a comfortable distance. Our salvation is about relationship with Him, so the means of that salvation will include relationship, even with women as messy as we are. We will look in next week's lesson at how our individual stories fit in with God's overall story of salvation for our messy world, as well as for the women like us in it.

3. How can Jesus's humility in getting messy with us impact how we view others' messiness?
4. When has your messiness been useful as you comfort another in hers?
5. How does the truth of Philippians 2:6-7 help you accept God's forgiveness?



Day Three: Your Story

1. Complete the chart from Day One, reading the passages from 2 Samuel and Luke.
2. What patterns do you see emerging in these women's lives?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

3. How did God treat them?

4. Based on your reading throughout the week, choose one woman from our study whose story resonates most with yours:
 - a. How is your story similar to hers?

 - b. How is it different?

5. Name some ways you have seen God work in your story as He worked in hers.

“We must realize that Christianity is the easiest religion in the world, because it is the only religion in which God the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit do everything.”

—Francis Schaeffer⁶

You may scan these women's stories and see a narrative that reminds you of a personal time of brokenness, or you may relate to the idea of just being messy in a messy world. On the other hand, you may feel like you have it all together and things are not very messy at all. Wherever you find yourself, let's seek to more fully know the love of Jesus through this study. These five ladies can teach us that God not only uses our messes in His plan of redemption, but He calls us family along the way. He identifies with us and leads us to find our identities in Him.

Lord, I'm Willing⁷

Lord, it's more than I'll ever understand,
How I am preserved by Thy hand.
But then there's only two things required of me:
To be faithful (because I've been set free)
And to be willing to be used by Thee.
So Lord I come willing to be used by Thee.

Lord, I am willing.
Lord, I am willing your will and way to see
Lord, I am willing. Lord, I am willing.
Lord, I am willing to be used by Thee.

Though sometimes I don't feel worthy,
consecrate me. I'm saved, I'm not the same.
Though the world may under-rate me,
dedicate me so I'll be wholly changed.

Lord, I am willing. Here I stand.
Lord, I am willing. Take my hand
and keep me by thy grace,
so I can run this race.

Bible Lagniappe
God Wants to Be at Home with Us

Have you ever noticed, at Christmas, songs call Jesus by the name Emmanuel? This means "God with us." But God was calling His Son Emmanuel long before Jesus was born in a manger (Isa. 7:14). God was also living among His people in a tent during Moses's leadership (Lev. 26:11-12). He is not only with His people as a whole, but with His individual sons and daughters in their scariest places as He told Joshua before battle (Josh. 1:9) and as David sang when he repented of serious sins (Ps. 51:11-12).



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).

¹The Gospel Coalition, *New City Catechism for Kids* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 46-47.

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/messy>.

³Tom Gibbs, “Messy Grace” (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, San Antonio: Sermon released November 22, 2015), <https://www.redeemersa.org/resources/multimedia/details?id=708273>.

⁴Max Lucado, “God’s Answer for the Mess of Life,” *Words of Hope and Help* (blog), July 2, 2019, <https://maxlucado.com/listen/gods-answer-for-the-mess-of-life>.

⁵Soojin Park, “Asian American Sisters, God Lifts Your Heads High,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), March 25, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/asian-americans-lift-heads>.

⁶Francis Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There” in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: The Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 182-183.

⁷Genna Rae McNeil, “Lord I’m Willing” in *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, edited by James Melvin Washington (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994), 256.