

Who	Reference	Story Summary	Planned or Unplanned?	What's the point?
1. Lot and his daughters	Genesis 19:30-38	<i>They got Lot drunk and lay with him so they could have children and preserve their family line.</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Lot's daughters only trusted in themselves and thought that they were the ones who planned for parenthood.</i>
2. Abram and Hagar	Genesis 16:1-16	<i>Sarai told Abram to use a female servant as a surrogate mother because she was unable to have children.</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Sarai and Abram didn't trust that God would make good on His promise to them so they took matters into their own hands.</i>
3. Tamar	Genesis 38	<i>Tamar tricked her father-in-law, Judah, into producing a son by pretending to be a prostitute.</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Judah didn't make good on his promise to his daughter-in-law so she took matters into her own hands.</i>
4. Sarah	Genesis 17:15-21, 21:1-7	<i>God blessed her and promised Sarah a son even though she was old and barren.</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>God made His everlasting covenant with Abraham and his offspring that would come through Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac.</i>
5. Elizabeth	Luke 1:5-25, 57-66	<i>God blessed Zechariah and Elizabeth with a son, John the Baptist, even though they were both very old.</i>	<i>Unplanned</i>	<i>God filled John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit and he prepared the way of the Messiah.</i>
6. Hannah	1 Samuel 1	<i>Hannah was barren but prayed to the Lord to give her a son. She promised to give him to God all the days of his life.</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>God answered Hannah's prayer and she trusted the Lord with her son, Samuel.</i>
7. Mary	Luke 1:26-38	<i>Mary was a virgin but would bear the Savior of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.</i>	<i>Unplanned</i>	<i>God made good on His promise to save His people from their sin through His Son, Jesus.</i>
8. Joseph	Matthew 1:18-25	<i>When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he planned to divorce her quietly but God appeared to him in a dream and told him to marry her and raise Jesus as his own. Joseph was a righteous man and did as God commanded.</i>	<i>Unplanned</i>	<i>Though God's plans for Mary were different than what Joseph expected, Joseph trusted the Lord and did as he as he was told in a dream.</i>

1. Which of these pregnancies would you say were “wickedly planned?” Explain. How do they compare to unplanned pregnancies?
Lust and the weakness of the flesh often drives sexual sins. But in these cases, the underlying sin is a false trust and a false hope. Lot's daughters wanted to preserve their family lines and got their father drunk to lay with him. Sarai told Abram to use a female servant as a surrogate mother because she was unable to have children. Tamar tricked her father-in-law, Judah, into producing a son by pretending to be a prostitute. These make most unplanned pregnancies look mild in comparison. In each of these cases the women (and in some cases the men) thought that they were the ones who planned for parenthood.
2. The Bible has stories of unplanned parenthood, too. Reread God's response to Sarah's planning in Genesis 17:15-21 and 21:1-7. Also read the story of Elizabeth in Luke 1:5-25, 57-66. What do these unlikely stories tell us about planning for parenthood?
Both Sarah (her name was changed along with God's promise of a son) and Elizabeth were unable to have children. They had given up hope of having children. Yet God provided them most unexpectedly. Sarah even laughed! Sarah, in particular, shows the contrast between thinking of children as if they were commodities that we can produce from our own wills, rather than as gifts received from God.
3. How does St. Paul contrast the two children of Abraham—Ishmael, born of Hagar, and Isaac, born of Sarah—in Galatians 4:21-31?
Hagar was a slave, and the child born to her was a child according to the flesh. That birth represents Mount Sinai and the Law. Isaac, born of Abraham's free wife, Sarah, was a child born of a promise. He represents the New Jerusalem and the Gospel. A child of the Law is one obtained by our own works. A child of the promise is received as a gift from God, just as the promise of the Gospel is received as a gift by faith.
4. What do Hannah and Mary share in common in their reaction to the news of their pregnancies?
Both women not only received their children with joy and thanksgiving, but also in faith. Mary's simple confession: “Let it be to me according to your word,” is a beautiful confession of faith that children are received as a gift of God, and in particular, this Child would be the Son of God.
5. Mary was a single woman at the time of her pregnancy, although she was betrothed to Joseph. Betrothal is a stronger relationship than engagement; they were legally committed to marriage. How does Joseph model for us how to care for a woman with an unplanned pregnancy? (Matthew 1:18-25)
Joseph, being a just man, does not wish to shame his betrothed. Before God tells him to take Mary as his wife, he believes that Mary has become pregnant because of adultery. But as the Eighth Commandment instructs us, he wished to preserve Mary's reputation and refused to publicize her supposed sin. After God revealed the true nature of Mary's miraculous pregnancy, Joseph took Mary as his wife and helped raise Jesus as His guardian.
6. While Mary's unplanned pregnancy was holy and she was righteous on account of her faith, many unplanned pregnancies are the result of sin. Where can a woman turn if she is faced with unplanned parenthood? See Psalm 68:4-6; Psalm 130:3-4.
God is not only the God of traditional families, but also broken ones. He does not forsake the fatherless or the widow. If God held our sins against us, even the sins of fornication and adultery, no one could stand! But with Him there is forgiveness. This is the hope to which a woman can turn when faced with unplanned parenthood, as well as the men who are participants in the same sin.
7. Read the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 and note the women who are listed. See also Romans 8:18-30. How might God use less than righteous pregnancies?

Both Sarah and Tamar end up in Jesus' lineage, along with Rahab (a prostitute) and Bathsheba (an adulteress). God used each of these women in spite of their sins to bring about His promise—the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is an example of how God causes all things to work together for the good of those whom He has called, who have received adoption as sons, and who love Him as their heavenly Father. He brings good out of all of our sinful messiness, even unplanned parenthood.

8. As we close the lesson, reflect on the question that started it. How does God view children, planned and unplanned? How do you view them? Has your opinion changed? Explain.