

When You Feel Like Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.

So many women wrestle with their identity once they become moms. What does God really have to say about the role?

*Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira’s new book, **Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.**, explores the identity crisis of motherhood. She writes from her experience as a woman who’s felt lost in mom stereotypes and cultural assumptions. From that perspective, she offers ways moms can reveal their whole, true selves—as women created intentionally, uniquely by a God who loves them and has specific, individual purposes for each of them. She makes the case that while motherhood does change women in many ways, it doesn’t leave moms as less than the complete women God intended them to be, but instead makes them more. She believes that this truth, however, is not often reflected in churches, where people seem more comfortable seeing motherhood as a woman’s primary God-honoring role. So who’s right here? Does the Bible really support her premise? Does God really want more for moms?*

This study walks readers through the Scripture behind Rivadeneira’s arguments.

Scripture: **Psalm 139; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 12:35–48; 10:38–42; 19:1–10; John 4:1–26**

Based on: *Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.: How to Reveal the Real You Behind All That Mom*, by Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira (WaterBrook Press, 2009)



Part 1 Identify the Current Issue

*Note to leader: This study works best if everyone has read the book *Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.*, by Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira.*

Whether on *Oprah*, in magazines, or at a local MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) group, you’ll hear a similar theme from today’s moms (and you know this if you are one!): they wrestle with a sense of having lost who they are in the mix of love and responsibility that comes with being a mom. As much as they love their kids and they love *being* moms, this loss of identity leaves many women feeling lonely, anonymous, and frustrated.

This particularly frustrates Christian moms, who feel the additional sting of wondering what God has in store for them now that they are moms—especially if their gifts don’t match their new mom role. While they may once have felt solid in their God-given gifts and purpose, motherhood can reduce many women to feeling unable to do anything right—or well—and wondering if God didn’t make a mistake in the way he gifted them, or even by giving them children.

While churches do a great job of supporting the mom role in general, many moms feel they don’t do a good job supporting women who deal with these issues. In fact, Rivadeneira contends that many Christians push the idea that once you become a mom, God’s only use for you is to raise godly kids and help out in the church nursery. In the beginning of chapter 4 (“Why God Cares About Who You Are”), Rivadeneira writes that this is the reason why “being a mom who wants to be used by God in a wide variety of ways can *feel* so selfish even when we know it’s not. But because there are so many well-meaning Christians who really do think moms should be happy to invest everything they have in their children, I think we moms need to explore the will of God for women whom he has blessed with children. God cares about us as *people*, not just as mothers” (p. 53).

Discussion Starters:

[Q] In what ways have you felt a loss of identity in your role as a mom? Where or when do you feel this most acutely?

[Q] How has your sense of purpose or giftedness changed since you became a mom? Do you now feel that God expects something different from you, or that he wants you to “shelve” some of your gifts and abilities for a while?

[Q] What’s been your experience at church regarding your role as mom versus you as a more well-rounded woman? Are you made to feel selfish, as Rivadeneira writes, for wanting to be used by God in a variety of ways and not just in your mom role?



Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: God sees you as having more than one role.

Read Psalm 139.

When David wrote these words, he was rejoicing in a God who saw him as more than any of his roles—more than a shepherd, more than a giant-slayer, more than a poet, a king, or a man on the run. He wrote beautifully of a God who knew him *intimately*—and who took the time to “search” and “know” him (v. 1).

Certainly, this is no different for moms today. God values *all* of who he made you to be, and has specific purposes for the way he made you.

In chapter 4, Rivadeneira writes, “Think about the people you know that intimately: your spouse, your kids, maybe your closest friend, your parents. We know that much detail only about the people we love deeply—and are interested in the most. It’s the same with God. He knows us like that not only because he loves us but because he is vitally, untiringly interested in us. God finds you—as his creation, as his child—interesting and *worth knowing*. Why shouldn’t everyone else?” (p. 56).

[Q] Think of a time when you felt reduced to just one role. Did you feel that this was as God wanted it to be? Why or why not?

[Q] What does it mean to you that God takes time to search and know you? What does that say about why you may want others to do the same?

[Q] How do you feel knowing that God finds you interesting? Is that easy for you to believe? Why or why not?

[Q] Psalm 139:16 says, “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” In what ways—if any—have you been made to feel that motherhood is the conclusion of God’s “book” for you?

[Q] What does your heart as a mother—and the way you care about your kids’ individual identities and your desire to see them use their gifts—tell you about how God feels about you as a gifted, beloved child of God?

Teaching Point Two: Jesus expects you to live out your gifts.

Read Luke 12:35–48.



Jesus uses startling and violent images in this passage on “watchfulness” to drive home the need for his followers to use what they’ve been entrusted with to spread his gospel until he returns. Verse 48 famously says, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

Each of God’s children has been given much—in the way of spiritual gifts, natural abilities, tangible blessings—and moms are no exception. Children are but one of the many (and certainly, the most amazing) gifts with which God chooses to bless people. But they don’t cancel out every other gift. If they did, one might expect Jesus to follow up this powerful passage with, “Unless, of course, you have kids. In that case, don’t worry about it.”

While oftentimes mothers may *wish* Jesus had said that, he didn’t. And God still longs for you—expects you even—to use what you’ve been given. Because the gifts he gives—kids included—all have kingdom purposes. Everyone has been “entrusted” with a variety of custom-made gifts intended to further the kingdom of God here on earth.

At the end of chapter 13 (“How to Help Other Moms Get Real”), Rivadeneira writes, “Remember, God made you the way he did to meet needs (feed hungry stomachs, hang with lonely people, seek justice) and reach people (those who are hurting and suffering and desperate for saving grace) all in his name, in your own way” (p. 187).

[Q] How do Jesus’ alarming words about servants being beaten for not using what they’ve been entrusted with affect the way you feel about gifts you haven’t used or valued?

[Q] One could argue that the gift of children “trumps” our other gifts from God. How do you feel or think about that? Do you believe God expects us to put our gifts on hold until our children grow up? Why or why not?

[Q] Read Luke 10:38–42 and Mark 14:3–9. Rivadeneira uses these two stories about Mary of Bethany to show how Jesus treasures our gifts even when they don’t fit what other people expect from us or assume we should do. What do these stories mean to you as a mother?

[Q] Have you ever tried to offer a gift and been met with ridicule or rebuke, as happened to Mary? What was your response? How do you imagine Jesus would respond?

[Q] How have you experienced your particular gifts, passions, or personality reaching the world for Jesus? How might you continue to use what you’ve been entrusted with—as a mother and a woman—to reach this needy world?

Teaching Point Three: Valuing moms for their unique selves is a means of showing grace.

Any mom who’s felt subject to stereotypes and assumptions, the loneliness of not fitting in, or the hurt of not living up to those stereotypes, knows how wonderful it feels to ultimately become known—and valued. In fact, getting to know another mom as a complete, gifted, specially made child of God, and then loving her because of—and in spite of—who she is, can be a way of showing grace to that woman.

This is what God does with us (Psalm 139), and something we see Jesus do time and again in the Gospels. Read John 4:1–26 and Luke 19:1–10. Consider how Jesus’ talking to, getting to know, and extending truth and grace to the Samaritan woman and Zacchaeus transformed their lives. If we are truly following in the way of Jesus, we should follow this example with one another. This act of being known—for good or for bad—and loved is a picture of the transforming love of Jesus. Since moms want this in their own lives, it’s a wonderful, affirming way to live out the “Golden Rule.”

[Q] Think about some ways you feel you’ve been labeled with a “fake I.D.” What are some ways the church could take the lead in getting to know women beyond any one role?

[Q] How has it felt when someone asks about you as a woman—not you as a mom? What’s the difference between the two?

[Q] What does it tell you about the heart of Jesus that he took time to chat with the Samaritan woman and Zacchaeus—two people who didn’t fit it?

[Q] What do Jesus’ actions of reaching out to these “misfits” tell you about how we should handle women in our congregation who might not fit traditional molds? Who are some moms Jesus might be calling you to reach out to right now?

[Q] What are some questions you wish others would ask you about yourself? How willing are you to ask the same of other women?

Optional Activity:

Recording their answers on a whiteboard or poster board, ask the group to list the attributes of the stereotypical Christian mom. Then, name which ones fit you and which ones don’t. Suggest what assumptions people make about you because you are a mom. Which are right and which are wrong?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

In her book, Rivadeneira works through the reasons God cares about our individual identities and how God makes himself known to his people. She also shows women why it’s *not* selfish to long to be known and loved for their true selves—as opposed to “just” as mom—and that in fact, revealing the complete woman God made you to be is key to doing “kingdom work.”

While acknowledging that the church hasn’t been particularly helpful in this area, Rivadeneira also believes that if women want this change, they need to be willing to make it themselves. To help women reveal their real identities and live as God intended them to, she suggests moms need to do such things as:

- * Get over the false guilt that keeps you from living as the woman God made you to be.
- * Find out what your “identity in Christ” *really* looks like. What misconceptions are you harboring?
- * Discover who God sees when he looks at you.
- * Identify your gifts.
- * Describe yourself in ways that show a piece of the real you.
- * Treasure—don’t resent—your limitations.
- * Become vulnerable.

She believes doing each of these things—along with drawing out and encouraging other women—helps each of us live the life God created us to live, by blessing others and ultimately changing the world through our God-given gifts.

Rivadeneira writes at the end of her book that this is all “pretty exciting stuff when you think that God has ordained each of us to share his grace and love and to transform the world for him! We are called to do it certainly through our children and through our roles as moms, but in all the other ways you’ve discovered as well.”

[Q] Do you find the call to transform the world through your children and other gifts exciting or overwhelming, or both? Why?

[Q] In what ways do you believe God may be calling you to use your gifts to change the world or to show love and grace to another mom?



[Q] What can you do today or this week to change the way others see you and your contributions to the world?

— *Ingrid Ramos is a freelance editor and writer. She lives with her family in the suburbs of Chicago.*

Recommended Resources

📖 Check out the following Bible studies at: ChristianBibleStudies.com

📖 [Who Am I?](#)

📖 [Seeing Ourselves as God Does](#)

📖 [Debunking the Myth of the Ideal Mom](#)

📖 [BuildingChurchLeaders.com](#)

📖 [A Mother and a Leader](#)

📖 [Women and the Church](#)

📖 [Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.: How to Reveal the Real You Behind All That Mom](#) by Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira (WaterBrook Press, 2009)

📖 [Parenting Is Your Highest Calling: And Eight Other Myths That Trap Us in Worry and Guilt](#), by Leslie Leyland Fields (WaterBrook Press, 2008)

📖 [The Myth of the Perfect Mother: Rethinking the Spirituality of Women](#), by Carla Barnhill (Baker, 2004)

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. 366.

