

A PRAYING MOTHER, A PROTECTIVE SISTER, AND A PITYING PRINCESS

Some of you know—just from the title—that this message will be about **whose** mother? The mother of **Moses**, right? The **Biblical account** of Moses' birth—and him being discovered and rescued by Pharaoh's daughter—has all the ingredients of a dramatic, tear-jerking story. It has a plot, a place, characters, and a conflict. What adds to the drama is that the **villain** is the father of the “hero”—who is actually a **heroine** because “she” is “a she.” Lastly—like all good stories—it has **a theme**; also known as “the moral of the story.”

Please know that even though I'm using the word “**story**,” it is not “make-believe” like some stories are. It is a **Biblical, historical event** that actually took place in the land of Egypt around 1450 B.C. as recorded in the Bible by none other than the baby boy in the basket—Moses himself!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Exodus 2; follow along as I read verses 1-10. Maybe you noticed as I was reading that **no names** are given. In fact, not even **God's name** is mentioned! But these “unnamed” characters are **actually not** anonymous because their names appear elsewhere in the Bible—with the exception of Pharaoh's daughter. As we go through this account this morning, we will be focusing primarily on two things: 1) the **challenges/difficulties** of motherhood; and 2) the **power and providence of God**. Please don't mentally “check out,” though, **men!** Although the challenges of motherhood are unique **to mothers**, we all have a need to grow in our understanding of the **power and providence** of God!

1. The presence of perilous times

In the way of **background**, God used Joseph—one of Jacob's 12 sons—to warn the people of Egypt that seven years of **bumper** crops would be immediately followed by seven years of **famine**. The king of Egypt—referred to **by the title** Pharaoh—put Joseph in charge of **collecting the excess corn** in preparation for the **shortage of corn**. Joseph's brothers and their families came to Egypt to “ride out the famine”—but ended up staying in Egypt for over 400 years!

Notice Exodus 1:7-8. As time went on, the appreciation for Joseph and his family **steadily declined**—so much so that they went from being **honored**...to being forced into **slave labor** as seen in vss 10-14...to the point where their newborn baby boys were **being murdered!**

We see that in Exodus 1:15-16. Imagine being a pregnant Hebrew woman about to give birth. You want some help, but here are your options.

Option #1: Your husband. If he stays home and doesn't report for his “brickmaking” duty, the Egyptian taskmasters would come knocking on the door. If they found out **why your** husband was home, they would send a mid-wife—and probably **an executioner** in case it was a boy!

Option #2: A midwife. If you called for a midwife, they were **under orders** from the king of Egypt **to kill** your baby if it was a boy. How? We aren't told—exactly—but **one way** they were killed was throwing them into the Nile River! We see that in Exodus 1:22.

Since there were no such things as ultrasounds, you **didn't know ahead of time** if you were having a boy or a girl. Rather than call for a midwife—in case it was a boy—you may consider option #3.

What was that? **Option #3: Go it alone.** Having no help, though, obviously carried a number of risks. The **baby** could die...or **you** could die...or **both** you and the baby could die. Not only that, **other people** besides you and your husband more than likely **knew you were pregnant!** Although the Bible doesn't give us any details, it is hard to imagine that the Hebrew women didn't do some kind of **forced labor** like their husbands.

It may not have been **field work**—maybe they **cooked food** or **washed clothes** for the slave supervisors—but it seems unlikely that they got to stay in their homes—if they had any—and not contribute to Pharaoh's labor pool!

On top of that, the life of your baby boy wasn't just in danger **at birth**. How could you give birth to...and hide...and raise your baby boy without him being discovered—then snatched from you and killed? Now you see why I'm referring to it as perilous times, right?

What birthing option did Moses' mother take? We don't know because the Bible doesn't say!

We do **know this**, though—not all the Egyptian midwives **obeyed the king** of Egypt! We see that in Exodus 1:17. In vs 20, it says that “God dealt well with the midwives.” That means He **blessed them**—even though they disobeyed the government! It is possible, then, that Moses’ mother—whose name is Jochebed according to Exodus 6:20—had a **God-fearing, Pharaoh-disobeying** Egyptian midwife!

Two things we ought to consider in way of application.

1. It is sometimes necessary to **disobey the government** in order to **obey God!** God blessed the midwives because they refused to **follow a command of Pharaoh** that **went against a command of God!** We do not have to—and **should not**—obey a law that contradicts a law of God’s! Peter—when commanded by the Jewish authorities to **stop preaching about Jesus**—said in **Acts 5:29** “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

2. We are **living in perilous times**. I’m referring more to the **spiritual** arena than the **physical**. There is literal, **physical** danger—I’m not denying that at all—but the **main danger** our children and teens face in this day and age is in the **spiritual** realm. It is the battle for **their hearts and souls**. God is being mocked...evil is called good...good is called evil...and **lies are being taught** as truth.

Many people who **study mental health** suggest that we are in the midst of a **mental health crisis among teenagers**. Why? Most of the so-called “experts” say **they don’t know why**, but in my mind it is pretty simple: it is because of an **all-out assault** on truth! Teach young people they **can be a cat...or a dog...or a turtle**. Tell boys they can “be a girl”—and that they should be allowed to **play on the girls’ softball team** and **go into the girl’s locker room** and/or bathroom. Teach them that if anyone questions them, the **questioner** has a problem—not the “pretender.” So the **questioner—the truth teller**—gets labeled as intolerant and unloving and unsympathetic. **Am I wrong** in suggesting that teaching **lies as truth**—and continually going **against your God-given conscience**—is one of the major reasons for this mental health crisis? I don’t think so!

Parents—and grandparents, you need to **teach truth** to the children—or grandchildren—God has placed into your lives! Don’t **throw them into the world** without the protection of the Word of God in their hearts and minds! Much more can be said, but please realize that **Satan is as a roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour. And he doesn’t always **look like a lion**—or like a red dragon with a pitchfork!

2. A “proper” child is born

It was during this time that Moses was born. Exodus 2:2 says “...he was a goodly child.”

The Hebrew word that “goodly” comes from is used 562 times in the OT. I found it interesting to learn that this same Hebrew word is used **seven times** in Genesis 1 when God **saw what He had created** and said that “it was good.” Moses obviously wasn’t perfect like God’s original creation, but some other meanings of the word—like “pleasant to look at” and “beautiful”—certainly would have fit him.

In Acts 7:20, Stephen refers to Moses as being “exceeding fair.” In Hebrews 11:23, the same Greek word is used and is translated “proper.” **Hebrews 11:23** “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw **he was a proper child**; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”

--Not surprisingly, **the Greek word** used to describe Moses has a meaning similar to what it said of him in the OT. He was elegant...fine...beautiful. But **aren’t all babies beautiful**—at least to their parents?

There was something about Moses, though, that led his parents to believe that **he was special**—and that God had a **special plan and purpose** for him. I think you’d agree that the **faith** referred to in Hebrews 11:23 is **not the faith** of the infant Moses, but rather the faith that **his parents had**.

True faith—**Biblical faith**—is not based on dreams and hopes and wishes, though—it is **based on the promises** of God’s Word! It is probable that they knew of **God’s promise to Abraham** that the land of Canaan would be given to the Hebrew nation. It is also quite likely **they knew of the oath that Joseph** had made the children of Israel “swear to” as recorded in Genesis 50:25-26.

Did Moses’ parents **somehow know** that Moses would be the one to bring God’s people out of Egypt and to Canaan, the Promised Land? Regardless of whether they believed that or not, they certainly viewed Moses as special!

What about us as parents? Do we view our children—and grandchildren—as **being special**? We certainly should! **Ps 127:3** “Lo, children are an heritage [a gift] of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.” **Psalm 139:14** reminds us that we are all “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Not only should you **view** children in your life as special, you need to **let them know** that they are special! Ron Hamilton wrote a wonderful children’s chorus called: “I’m Special to Jesus.” I’m not going to sing it for you, but the chorus goes like this:

I'm special to Jesus, there's no one else like me.

I wouldn't trade places with anyone else, I'm special you see!

God has prepared a task, He wants me to do.

I'm special, I'm special to my Lord, I'm special, I'm special to my Lord.

3. A purposeful plan is made

Notice the end of vs 2: “...she hid him three months.” Vs 3 “And when she could not longer hide him...”

--How stressful were those 3 months? We don’t know, do we?

--How many “close calls” were there? We don’t know that either!

How soon did Jochebed have to return to work—and was young Miriam taking care of Moses during the day?

--And where was 3-year-old Aaron while all this was taking place?

Again, we don’t know. But we **do know this**—God protected the baby from being discovered for 3 months!

And somehow, she realized that it was no longer safe to try to hide him, so **she was led**—I believe **by God**—to build an ark. Why do I think Jochebed was led of God to do what she did? Here’s two reasons:

1) We already noted from Hebrews 11:23 that she was a **woman of faith**. Because she believed God had a special plan for her child, she would have been asking God for both **protection** and **wisdom**. Although James 1:5 wasn’t written yet, God’s people **have an understanding within them** that God is the source of wisdom. So she **asked for wisdom**—and received wisdom! **James 1:5** “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

2) Here’s a second reason I believe Jochebed was led by God: too many things had to happen “just right” for it to be **her own plan**! Here’s what I mean.

--The ark—think floating basket—had to be waterproof and sturdy enough to hold a wiggly baby boy!

--It had a cover—vs 6 says she opened it—but the cover couldn’t be too close to the baby’s face or he would suffocate! Jochebed probably didn’t get to try it out to see if it would work—at least not in the river!

--It had to be placed in a spot where **women** came to the river—but not **Pharaoh’s soldiers**!

--It also had to be put in a spot where it wouldn’t **float away**—and where Miriam could see “afar off” as stated in vs 4.

--And let’s not forget the possibility of crocodiles and/or snakes!

So...we can believe all these things happened **by chance**—or we can believe **God guided** Jochebed and gave her wisdom! I’m going with **God’s guidance and wisdom over chance**!

Here are **two takeaways** for us:

1) Just as there came a time when Jochebed could no longer hide Moses from danger, parents come to the realization that they **cannot be there 24/7** to protect their children from danger. We need to turn our children over to God’s care and not depend solely on our protection.

--We **can’t be everywhere** all the time—but God can be—and is!

--Our **wisdom is sometimes flawed**—and our **strength often times fails**—but God is infinite in wisdom and Almighty in power! So all of us—not just “Moms”—need to grow in our trust of God.

2) But trust in God doesn’t mean we just recklessly **them into the river** and hope they float—and can get away from the crocodiles! We need to do our **best to prepare them**! Just as Jochebed took great care in making that ark, mothers need to take great care in preparing their children for the world.

They need to know and obey God’s instruction manual—His Word—and they need to be an example themselves of how to live a life that is pleasing to God!

C.S. Robinson combined these two thoughts well: “Make the best ark you can; place it in the river at the safest spot you can find; leave it there; then trust God.”

Next, let’s consider... **4. A pitying princess is touched**

Notice vs 5. Did Pharaoh’s daughter come to **that spot**—at that **time**—**every** day? We don’t know, do we? Did she have some kind of consistent pattern that was studied by Jochebed? Again, we don’t know.

But we do know that it wasn’t an accident **where** the basket was placed...and **when** it was placed... and **who** found it. She saw the basket—and it piqued her curiosity. So she sent one of her servants to get the basket.

Now vs 6. “And when she had opened it, she saw the child...” Let’s pause here for a moment.

What did we learn earlier about the **appearance** of this baby? He was **beautiful!**

And then **he wept!** Was the baby crying **before** she opened the ark? It doesn’t seem like that was the case—but he was crying now! And her heart was touched by his tears! **Billy Sunday wrote:** “The tears of that baby were the jewels with which Israel was ransomed from Egyptian bondage” (*Great Preaching on Mothers*; pg 148). How old was **Pharaoh’s daughter**? We’re not told! But...we know from vs 10 that she was old enough to adopt him! Maybe **she had lost** a child herself—or maybe she was **married and childless**. Regardless of her **status** as a mother, she had a **mother’s** heart! “She had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

Let that sink in for a minute! It’s pretty safe to say Pharaoh’s daughter had been **sheltered from** the **brutal, senseless murdering** of who-knows-how-many Hebrew baby boys! But now she is looking into the **tear-filled eyes—and quivering lips**—of a beautiful child that her father would want killed! Not her, though! She wanted to keep this child **for herself!** Goes to show that we have to be careful not to judge people by their parents!

Lastly, let’s consider... **5. The providential protection—and payment—from God**

We’ve already touched on God’s providence in **protecting the baby** for three months...and the ark being **constructed just right**...and placed in **the right place**...at the **right time**...and found by just the **right person**. In fact, I would go so far as to say that **no one**—other than the daughter of Pharaoh himself—could have obtained an exception from her father’s murderous decree!

God’s providence doesn’t end there, though. **Moses cries** at just the right time—and her **motherly heart** is touched. Miriam—probably a girl of only six or seven years of age—stands **far enough away** not to be noticed—yet “appears” at just the right time. Not only that, but she is so discreet in asking, “Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women,” that Pharaoh’s daughter seems to suspect nothing!

The response? Look at vs 8: “And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother.” How did this little girl keep herself from **giggling with glee** and giving the whole thing away?

Did she **casually walk away**—or was it proper for her to run because she was on a mission for Pharaoh’s daughter? Not sure about you, but makes me want to ask Miriam and Jochebed a whole bunch of questions when I see them! Imagine **how excited** Miriam was when she told her mother what had happened—and that Pharaoh’s daughter wanted her to come and nurse baby Moses for her!

And let’s not forget, Miriam and Jochebed **couldn’t act like mother and daughter** when they went back to Pharaoh’s daughter to work out the “nursing” arrangement. And **imagine the emotions** of Jochebed! How difficult it must have been to “keep herself together” upon seeing her baby boy again—especially considering she had kissed him goodbye, put him in a basket, and pushed him out into the river earlier that very day!

And—if all of that isn’t overwhelming enough—notice what Pharaoh’s daughter says to her in vs 9. “And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

Imagine what was going through her mind. “Wages! I’m getting paid to take care of **my own** baby!” I couldn’t help but think about **Ephesians 3:20** “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...” Jochebed sure experienced that, didn’t she?

Before we close with some application, here are a couple of other things that are “fun” to think about:

--Did Pharaoh’s daughter **ever find out** that Moses was Jochebed’s son?

--And if so, did she feel “foolish” for paying a woman to raise her own child?

Some more questions to ask Jochebed, right?

--Here’s one more. How many times was Pharaoh asked, “Hey Pharaoh, there’s this Hebrew woman named Jochebed who says she is raising a Hebrew boy for **your** daughter! Is that true?”

We serve an amazing, powerful, all-knowing God, don’t we? I don’t think I’m being irreverent to say God has a sense of humor, too! Why do I say that?

--Because even though Pharaoh’s **daughter** is paying Moses’ mother to raise him for her, **Pharaoh** is quite likely “footing the bill.”

--Not only that, Pharaoh also becomes the **protector of Moses** because Moses belongs to his daughter!

--And this same Moses—who Pharaoh is protecting as a baby—will become the man that God uses to defeat the mighty Egyptian army 80 years in the future!

God has not changed! He is still amazing...and all powerful...and all-knowing. He still wants parents to raise their children for God—and He is as willing as ever to give parents **the guidance and wisdom** they need.

--But we need to come to the resource He has given us for guidance and wisdom—His Word!

--And we need to recognize that we are not able—in our own strength—to handle this difficult and yet rewarding responsibility of child-rearing without Him

--And—like Jochebed—we need to do our best to prepare and protect, then have faith and trust in God!

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First—although this was not a salvation message, per se—our greatest need is to personally have Jesus as our Savior. You cannot be a good mom without being saved—it is impossible!

--Pretty safe to say you will not trust God’s Word for wisdom in raising children if you aren’t trusting in God’s way to get to heaven!

--Not only that, it is impossible to be a godly example to your children if you don’t have the Holy Spirit residing in you!

2. Second—for those of you moms who are a child of God—don’t beat yourself up! God longs to forgive you and help you and give you the strength and wisdom you need.

Don’t focus on your failures—focus on His grace being sufficient!

3. Third, I believe all of us need to be reminded of the importance of praying for mothers with young children and teenagers—and commit to praying for them!