

“Raising Children in an Ungodly Culture”

Exodus 1:15-2:10; Hebrews 11:23-25

The Bible is full of heroes and heroines of faith. And I don't mean the Abrahams, Daniels, Josephs, Noahs and Pauls. I mean the less familiar people in the Bible who demonstrated a tremendous commitment to God in times when very few people walked with God. Which helps us because, like them, we too are not well known outside our own family or community, yet are no less important to God and have every chance to show we are God's heroes and heroines where we live and in the time in which we live.

Our theme this year is “Understanding the Times”, looking at godly people who lived for God in situations and times when honouring God was not easy. Let's remember from Acts 17:26-27 that God places everyone exactly when and where He wants us, and all He expects from you and I is to live out our faith in the circumstances we find ourselves in. Just like Jochebed who lived for God in a very dark time, yet refused to compromise her faith in God. She understood the times in which she lived and showed courageous faith. Since its Mother's Day she's a great encouragement to moms on how to raise children in an ungodly culture. All of us can learn from the parenting example of Jochebed and Amram, Moses' mother and father.

The opening verses of Exodus show us how quickly circumstances can change in a short period of time with a change in government. Joseph was a great hero to Israel as well as a very wise respected leader in Egypt. God purposely orchestrated the events of Joseph's life so he could save the people of Israel who now live in Egypt. The Pharaoh of Joseph's time favoured Israel and Israel freely worshipped God under his rule. But a new Pharaoh comes with new policies and ideas about these Jews who were multiplying greatly. Feeling threatened by the people of God, this new Pharaoh changed laws to hurt and harass them. This is not new. This often happens when governments are pressured by a vocal minority who feel that the people of God's values threaten their lifestyles that opposes God's Word.

So Pharaoh made them into slaves and oppressed them ruthlessly. In spite of their suffering and hardships they keep having babies!! God is blessing even in difficulties. So the Pharaoh gets drastic. He introduces his own final solution. He calls Puah and Shiprah, the 2 midwives overseeing all the Jewish midwives, to kill any Jewish boys when they are born but let the girls live. The girls would eventually grow and be assimilated into the harems where they would marry Egyptians and lose their Jewishness.

When Pharaoh heard the midwives failed to kill new born baby boys, he summoned Puah and Shiprah into his presence again. They tell Pharaoh that the Hebrew women are more vigorous than Egyptian women when they give birth! It may have been partly true since the Hebrews were always working hard and the Egyptians were not. Whatever the case, Pharaoh, frustrated by the midwives' non-compliance gives the order that any Egyptian is legally allowed to throw any Hebrew baby boy in the Nile – obviously with no repercussions.

So how do you walk with God and raise children when you live in a culture that doesn't want your children or doesn't like the Christian values you want your children to have? It's easy to become fearful of our culture and the power of an ungodly government, but we have to remember who's really in control and who every person must answer to for the decisions they make. Moses' parents ...

Refused to Let the Culture Rob them of Their Joy **(Ex. 2:1-3; Heb. 11:23)**

Imagine being a Hebrew when this edict was given. Husbands and wives would have to decide whether they were even going to enjoy their marriage for fear of having a child that was male. Should we bring a child into this kind of world where he will be rejected because he happens to be male? After all we already have two (Aaron and Miriam).

Jochebed and Amran (Num. 26:59) had to decide whether they were going to live in fear or whether to enjoy the life they had and trust God. They chose not to let people rob them of enjoying the life God gave them and so they had another baby and it was a boy. An exceptional child. The phrase and 'she saw that he was 'fine' is almost identical to the Genesis summary when God saw that what He created was good. The word for "fine/beautiful" child is the same word used by God when he saw what He had made was "good". And so the astute reader senses that something special is going to happen. God is going to do some new creation work through this child.

But isn't every child special to God? Don't we all believe that God is going to do something special through our children? Absolutely. Which makes us realize how cruel abortion is. That every abortion is a murder of a God-created life with the potential of making a difference in the world around us. Yet most cultures disagree. And so the culture of Jochebed's day as well as ours has little value for life. Have courageous faith like Jochebed and Amran who chose to live the life God gave them, risking having a child who might be a boy, and then to protect this child who somehow they feel has God's hand on him.

But they do have a problem. They don't want their baby boy to die. What to do? Most likely those 3 months were filled with planning and praying and they felt led of God to make a mini-ark and trust God to save and protect their baby boy. In essence what were they doing?

Trusting God to Provide Godly Influencers **(2:4-8)**

Both Amram and Jochebed were descendents of Levi whose family line God would eventually choose to be the priesthood in the tabernacle. God chose a family who practised their faith in God through whom would come Aaron the first high priest and Moses the deliverer of Israel. Both Jochebed and Amram trusted God and sensing that God's hand was on this child placed their boy in God's hands. If this child was going to be used of God, then they needed to trust God to save him for the purpose He had planned. And by letting him go they knew they had to believe God would use other people to

Help in resolving any problems (v.3)

Heb. 11:23 commends both mom and dad here for their faith in hiding Moses. How many close calls did they have? How many times had God answered their prayers in protecting their son for 3 months. But now he was getting bigger and it was getting harder. So they prayed. And they made a 'basket'. But the word for basket is literally box and its same word for Noah's box, the Ark. No other place is this word used except in these 2 places. Like in Noah's day, God chose to save one through the waters who will save another generation. Was it crazy? Yes and no. The box is sealed in pitch (like the Ark) but its also placed in the reeds, not in the open Nile where it would float away

uncontrolled. Instead Jochebed sends Moses' older sister to watch where the ark goes and she follows (guides?) it towards Pharaoh's daughter, who is bathing with an entourage of assistants.

Jochebed has a problem. She comes up with a solution and part of the solution involves trusting people she doesn't know

To provide protection for her child (vv.4-8)

As parents we always want to protect our children but we can't be there for them all the time. We have to trust God has other people who will watch over them too. So Moses' mother has to trust God who uses her daughter (Jochebed's plan) and the daughter of the one who wants all Hebrew baby boys thrown in the river (God's plan)! What did Miriam think when she saw Pharaoh's daughter with her baby brother? What did Moses' mother think when she first heard the account? Ironically, God will use people we would never envision being the very ones who He uses to guide, direct and watch over our children.

When we don't know what to do we need to pray the Jehoshaphat prayer. In 2 Chron. 20:12, King Jehoshaphat when surrounded by 2 nations ready to attack Israel prayed: *"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."* That's not a lack of faith, that's placing our faith in the One who knows what to do because He sees and knows everything and can do anything and use the most unlikely people.

Jochebed had a plan. She places her baby in a 'box' and places it in a location where its found by the Pharaoh's daughter. How long did they watch and wait? Perhaps they knew the approximate time the women came. Maybe she timed it with when Moses would be hungry and cry out. However it worked, God orchestrated every detail of this entire matter. There is great irony here of course.

The Pharaoh who ordered all Hebrew baby boys thrown into the Nile (by the way wasn't Moses placed in the Nile?), has a daughter who has compassion for one of these Hebrew baby boys. Who she then protects and raises in the Pharaoh's own house, spared from slavery, educated by the Egyptians, only to be used by God to deliver Israel out of Egypt years later. You can't make this stuff up!

But until the time comes when we have to trust God to provide godly influencers into our children's lives, we need to

Use the Time We Have to Spiritually Ground Your Child in God's Truths (2:9-10)

In an ironic twist, Pharaoh's daughter not only had compassion for the boy (disobeying her own father's orders), but she agrees with Miriam's suggestion, to find a Hebrew mother to nurse the baby. Of course she gets Jochebed, who gets her baby back and gets paid to look after him! The first baby bonus!

So God solved their problem, protected their child, then let Jochebed look after Moses, probably even letting him live at home for a few years. Those few years were crucial as Amram and Jochebed would have taught Moses at an early age who he was, a Hebrew, a son of the covenant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A child of God. Why did they ground their child in the truths of God? Like all of us,

So that they will honour God with their choices in life (2:11-15)

The Moses narrative jumps 40 years in Ex. 2:11-15. The phrase 'looked on their labours' implies sympathy and that his going out to his brothers was therefore a regular occurrence. He knew he was a Hebrew not an Egyptian. He had been grounded that he was not an Egyptian but a child of Abraham. One of these days (or perhaps on many occasions) Moses sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. So he 'beats' [same word] the Egyptian, probably not intending to kill him, yet he does.

Moses' intent was to defend his fellow Hebrews and correct the wrongs he saw. It was a good choice but it had a terrible outcome. Yet Heb. 11:24 says Moses refused to be called the son of the Pharaoh. Perhaps this was the day he truly made that choice. Who am I? A child of God? Who are these people being mistreated? My brothers. Am I in a position where I can help them? He thought he was and believed his choice was a godly one but the consequence of his actions causes a division in his life. He could plead forgiveness with Pharaoh and be possibly reinstated or he can flee and remove himself once for all from his Egyptian ties.

Maybe Moses thought he could be an Egyptian and sympathetic to his fellow Israelites. But this decision changes all that. God uses his decision to direct Moses away from the ungodly influence of Egypt so God can mold and shape him in the desert. God uses Moses' desire to help his fellow Israelites to eventually call him back to Egypt and lead them out, but that will take 40 years of preparation.

Providing our kids and grandkids with the foundational truths in God's Word equips them with the wisdom to make good decisions. When we model biblical decisions in our own life and children's lives growing up, we provide for them an example of how to make decisions that honour God. Because eventually,

We must release them to God even if it means suffering (Heb. 11:26)

If we want our children to honour God with their choices that has to mean someday, like Moses, those choices will clash with the godless culture they live in. It might result in persecution, job loss, broken relationships. And while we hate seeing our children suffer, you can't live for God and not experience trials from the consequences of going against an ungodly culture. Surely Jochebed and Amram knew one day Moses would suffer if he chose God over Pharaoh. Heb. 11:26 describes it well:

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

Sin does have its pleasing moments; but it's just that—a fleeting moment. And then you have to live with the consequences of those poor momentary decisions possibly all your life. Moses 'chose' for himself that obeying God even with its painful consequences, is better than the temporal, never satisfying moments of sin. And while it's hard to see our children suffer, we can be pleased by their faith in God. Because ultimately we have to remember, as Hebrews 11:6 tells us,

Having Unwavering Faith Receives Faith's Rewards (11:6)

The theme of Hebrews 11 is found in v.6:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek him

Living by faith results in the rewards of faith. Many of those rewards are waiting for us in glory but many are found here too. God' rewards us with His peace when we trust Him by faith in anxious circumstances (Phil 4:6-7), when He answers our prayers (John 15:7) and when our obedience results in His joy (John 15:11). We also have His direction when we trust Him and resist leaning on out own understanding.(Prov. 3:5-6).

And as parents we get the joy of seeing our children and their children living for and serving God. The joy of partnering with them in ministry as they get older. The reward of answered prayers for them as they go through difficulties, knowing God has their lives in control. The anticipation of seeing them one day in heaven as our life draws to a close.

What a heart-wrenching moment it would have been to give up her son to the Pharaoh's daughter for good. Seeing it was God's plan doesn't necessarily make it easier. God never promises it will be easy to show courageous faith. Leaving things with God can be very painful. Ask the parents of a child who bends to the ungodly pressure of the world and rejects the gospel and lives a life of sin. Often the parents only recourse is to pray and leave it in God's hands. It hurts.

Or when the doctor says, *'I'm sorry I can't do anymore for them.'* Or the pain of breaking off a close relationship because you know and they know it's not what God wants.

The Bible warns that there will be terrible times in the last days. Many suggest we are very near. Our government is making decisions that do not reflect moral values of Scripture. Unborn boys and girls are robbed of God-given life through abortion. Marriage is losing it's unique value and contribution to the family unit. Evolution keeps a stranglehold on the world of science even though their theories are being proved wrong continually. We need to have courageous faith to live today to share God's message to a dying world who needs Jesus Christ.

For maybe someone this morning, you need to have the courage to take that first step of faith in Christ alone. Jesus died for your sins. We can't get to heaven on our own merits. Without faith it is impossible to please God. It is by God's grace that salvation is available through faith alone. God is the only sure thing in this world. Trust Him with your life, then live for Him one day at a time.

Believe God enables us to live courageously for Him. He has given us His Spirit who equips us to live for Him each day if we trust Him. Memorize and remember Heb. 11:6

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

Like Moses' parents, most of us live our lives in the background and the greatest impact we make is simply laying a biblical foundation in our children's lives so that they make godly decisions with theirs. Even though we too may live in a culture that rejects God, Jesus says in John 16:33

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
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