

Parenting by Faith

Text: Exodus 2:1-10 (See also Acts 7:20 & Heb. 11:23)

Introduction:

1. Context: Joseph and his generation have died and the great exploits of Joseph for the nation fade from memory. Another Pharaoh assumes the throne who knows not Joseph.
2. The multiplication of the children of Israel concerns Pharaoh so he tries to suppress their growth in three ways:
 - He enslaves and oppresses them but they continue to multiply.
 - He makes a covert order to the Hebrew midwives to kill any Hebrew boy that is born. The midwives disobeyed the order due to their fear of God.
 - He makes a public order to all Egyptians to cast any Hebrew baby boy into the Nile River which was infested with crocodiles.
3. Into this dark and dangerous scene, a precious baby boy is born to godly parents, Amram and Jochebed.
4. Hebrews 11:23 informs us that the secret behind the account of Exodus 2:1-10 was this couple's faith. Moses became a great man of faith, and he learned it first from his godly parents. In this lesson we are going to consider **5 aspects** to their faith as parents that will inspire and help us to be better parents for God's glory.

Their faith was a...

I. PRESENT FAITH (VS. 1; Heb. 11:23)

Their faith stood out in the evil and ungodly environment they lived in. It stood out against:

A. The Paganism of Egypt (the world)

1. The paganism of Egypt is well documented.¹ They worshipped many false gods. Pharaoh was worshipped as a god. The bull or calf Apis was worshipped as a god. The sun god Ra was worshipped, depicted as a falcon-headed man with a disc above his head. The pyramids were associated with the worship of the sun. The serpent was worshipped as the goddess Wadjet. There was the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis and her son Horus. You can get a sense for the spiritual darkness in Egypt just from looking at what the archaeologists spade has uncovered in reference to Egypt's paganism.
2. Unlike the majority who believed in false gods made with hands, Amram and Jochebed believed in and knew the One True God, the Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
3. Do you have a relationship with the true God by faith in Christ?

B. The Paganism within Israel (compromise)

1. Sadly, many of Amram and Jochebed's fellow Israelites had succumbed to the influence of Egyptian idolatry. We know this from

¹ D Cloud Pictorial Bible, slide set 08 Egypt.

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Joshua 24:1 – “Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, **and in Egypt**; and serve ye the LORD.” See also Ezekiel 6:5-8.

2. What a blessing that in the midst of all that heathen darkness and compromise, Moses was born into a home where the light of God’s truth shined brightly. “Faith is the greatest blessing and the greatest heritage we can give our children.” (Butler)
3. We are faced with the same kind of challenges in raising children for God in our day; a wicked world that is exerting pressure on us to conform to its pagan ways and much compromise amongst those who claim to be followers of God. By the grace and power of God we can be transformed rather than conformed (Rom. 12:1-2). We can know God and live for Him in an evil age.
4. What about you? Which God do you serve? Do you serve the gods of this age or the One True God? Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

C. The Perversion of Egypt

1. We know from Leviticus 18 that immorality and perversion of the worst kind was endorsed and practiced in Egypt including adultery, Sodomy and bestiality. The Egyptians were devoted to external appearance, physical beauty and sensual appeal. The Egyptian women, particularly of high society, were devoted to cosmetics.²
2. In the midst of this perverted, immoral society the breakdown of marriage and the home were common, we see a godly couple that believed in marriage and the home as ordained by God – “and took to wife a daughter of Levi” (Vs. 1).
3. What rays of light would shine from that little home in Goshen. By God’s grace, Amram and Jochebed raised a godly seed. By God’s grace, all of their children had an impact for God in their generation:
 - a. Miriam is called a ‘prophetess’ in Exodus 15:20 and led the other Hebrew women in praise to God after the Red Sea crossing.
 - b. Aaron became the head of the Aaronic priesthood. He was also a right-hand man to Moses (e.g., as spokesman before Pharaoh).
 - c. Moses, the most prominent of all was used of God to lead His people out of Egypt. He is also noted in the Bible as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (See the prophecy of Deut. 18:15).
4. God has not changed and despite the fact our world today is just as wicked as the world of Moses’ day, He still desires the establishment of godly homes through marriage and a godly seed (Mal. 2:15; Heb. 13:4). In fact, the great need of the hour is for godly homes like that of Amram and Jochebed. God give us strong homes and strong churches in this evil, apostate hour!

² Ibid.

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Their faith was a...

II. PERCEPTIVE FAITH (Vs. 2A)

Their faith gave them a vision for:

A. The Preciousness of the Child – ‘goodly’

1. Moses is described as “a goodly child” (Ex. 2:2), “a proper child” (Heb. 11:23) and “exceeding fair” (Acts 7:20). All of these words refer to the beauty of the child.
2. No doubt their hearts were stirred at the sight of this child which was “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) and a precious gift from God to them (Psalm 127:3).
 - a. Psalm 127:3 “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.”
 - b. Psalm 139:14 “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.”
3. While Moses was an exceptionally attractive child, there is a pure beauty that can be seen in the face of every newborn child. Each life is precious and God given.

B. The Potential of the Child

1. Their zeal to conceal him was motivated by a higher principle than just the natural beauty of the child. As godly parents, they were given insight into the future of the child. They were able to discern that God’s stamp of approval was upon their child and so they would seek to preserve Him for the Divine purpose. The phrase “exceeding fair” in Acts 7:20 literally means “fair to God”. God’s hand was upon this child in a special way from its earliest moments.
2. As an old commentator once put it, “A voice whispered in the mother’s heart that the child was special to God.” Or as John Butler puts it, “The eye of faith could see something special about Moses. There was the touch of God upon him.”
3. Note: You may not have a child who is destined for something as big as Moses, but the eye of faith will give you a vision for their potential to be used of God.

Their faith was a...

III. PROTECTING FAITH (VS. 2B-4)

Moses was born at a dangerous time and steps were taken by these godly parents to protect Moses from the threat over his life in Egypt. The lives of our children are also under threat in a wicked world under the dominion of Satan (Eph. 2:1-2). Take note of the **four key characters** who worked together to see this precious little life protected from destruction. There was...

A. The Headship of a Leading Father (Heb. 11:23)

1. While the three female characters are prominent in this account, there is a man in this picture also! “And there went **a man** of the house of Levi...” Every Christian home needs a godly man who will be a leader, protector and provider. Stephen in his defence before

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the Council emphasises that the child was brought up in “**his father’s house**” (Acts 7:20).

2. Heb. 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.” In this verse, faith is attributed to **both** the father (Amram) and the mother (Jochebed). This was no lopsided marriage with one spouse fervent for the Lord and the other disengaged, apathetic and weak. This husband-and-wife team was **working together** to protect this child from harmful influences. They ‘hid’ him. The word means to store up, to treasure, to conceal for a definite purpose. As parents we are to seek to protect our children from the spiritual dangers of the world.
3. In God’s Divine order, the husband and father is the head of the home.
 - a. Eph. 5:23 “For **the husband is the head of the wife**, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”
 - b. 1 Cor. 11:3 “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and **the head of the woman is the man**; and the head of Christ *is* God.”
 - c. Headship equals leadership, not dictatorship and is incredibly positive if it is exercised correctly!
4. Why some Christian men don’t lead!
 - a. Society discourages them from leading. We living in a very feminised, anti-male society. Feminism, while historically advocating against some terrible injustices against woman, has propagated many lies that have all but destroyed male leadership.
 - b. Their wives don’t let them. Sister, remember to encourage your husband’s leadership (Eph. 5:22 – “Wives, submit yourselves...”). Your godly submission empowers your husband’s leadership. Some women want a puppy dog on a leash more than they want a real husband with leadership qualities. In fact, the general spirit out there is one of resistance to strong leadership of any kind in the home or the church.
 - c. They are self-centred and don’t want to lead. Some men make personal peace their god in life and shy away from tackling the tough decisions. They don’t want to ruffle anyone’s feathers by taking a stand only because they don’t want their own feathers ruffled!
 - d. They are apathetic and lukewarm spiritually. It is very hard for the wife and children to rise above the spiritual temperature of the leader of the home. One of the great blights in Christian homes today is weak men who are more interested in their hobbies, sports and pleasures than the things of God.

B. The Handiwork of a Loving Mother (Vs. 3)

1. She made an “ark of bulrushes”. The word ‘bulrushes’ is “papyrus, the paper reed: a kind of rush which was very common in ancient Egypt, but has almost entirely disappeared...It had a triangular stalk

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about the thickness of a finger, which grew to the height of ten feet; and from these the lighter Nile boats were made, whilst the peeling of the plant was used for sails, mattresses, mats, sandals, and other articles, but chiefly for the preparation of paper.” (Keil) Isaiah 18:2 “That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of **bulrushes** upon the waters...”

2. The ark was placed among the “flags”. The word “flags” is translated from a word which refers to “a smaller species of papyrus” (Edersheim).
3. This little vessel, crafted and waterproofed by maternal hands, was what kept the river of death from touching the precious little bundle inside. Some say “you can’t protect your kids from everything”. While this is true, that shouldn’t prevent us from protecting our kids from some things! Our job is to keep the river of Egypt out of their lives!
4. This involved disobeying an ungodly law in Egypt. We are duty bound to uphold civil law so long as it doesn’t go against Divine law (Romans 13:1-7) but if it does, we are to “obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29) It appears from Acts 7:19 that some of the other Israelites went along with the king’s edict and cast their own children into the Nile River.
5. J. Grant: “There is surely significance in the fact that although the parents chose to place their child in the Nile, the river of death to the Israelites, they also sought to preserve his life. The principle here is of utmost importance. The river could not be avoided, but they worked to ensure that he was kept safe in it. Is this not a work in which godly parents have been engaged throughout the ages? They live with the knowledge that their children cannot be hidden from the world in later life, so they seek to ensure that when the day comes to leave home and enter that world, which is death to those who succumb to it, they are prepared and fitted to survive it. **The ark must be placed in the river, but the river must never be in the ark else it will end the life of the child.**”
6. This little ark reminds us of another ark (same word) which Noah made. It, too, was sealed both “within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6:14). Both arks served to save people from death. In that work they are a picture of Christ, the Great Ark of safety, in Whom One finds eternal safety when he trusts in Him for salvation.

C. The Help of a Watching sister (Vs. 4)

1. We need to pray for the older children in our families. There is a lot of emphasis in Scripture on the firstborn. If Satan can topple the firstborn, or an older sibling, it can have a domino effect in families.
2. Challenge to older siblings: Don’t be selfish and view your younger siblings as a pest to be avoided all the time! Be a spiritual leader and watch out for them. Encourage them in the Lord. Don’t underestimate how powerful your influence is in the lives of your younger siblings.

D. The Hand of an All-Powerful God

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1. While God's Name is not specifically mentioned in these verses, the account is designed to draw our attention to God's unseen hand, moving in these events. In fact, God is the most important Person in this account.
2. As parents, there is only so much we can do. We are totally dependent upon God to intervene in the lives of our children if they are going to turn out for Him. Moses' parents placed their child completely in God's hands. Sometimes we have to give something up in order to get it back, surrender it in order to receive it. God often moves when we are placed in a position of utter dependence upon Him.
3. Illustration: Abraham placed Isaac in the place of death, upon the altar.
4. "The renewed mind enjoys one of its sweetest exercises, while tracing the divine footsteps in circumstances and events in which a thoughtless spirit sees only blind chance or rigid fate. **The most trifling matter may, at times, turn out to be a most important link in a chain of events by which the Almighty God is helping forward the development of His grand designs...** Thus was it with the daughter of Pharaoh, in her walk by the river's side. Little did she think that she was helping forward the purpose of "the Lord God of the Hebrews!" How little idea had she that the weeping babe, in that ark of bulrushes, was yet to be Jehovah's instrument in shaking the land of Egypt to its very centre. Yet so it was. The Lord can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the remainder." (C.H. Mackintosh)

Their faith was a...

IV. PROVIDENTIALLY REWARDED FAITH (Vs. 5-9A)

The faith of these parents in an impossible situation moved the heart and hand of God on their behalf. "The great lesson of this incident is the presence of God's wonderful Providence, working out its designs by all the play of human motives." (Maclaren)

A. God's ways are Mysterious – the events (Vs. 5-6)

1. An unlikely method (Vs. 1-4) – the river of death becomes a river of life.
2. An unlikely event – the timing of this event could not be orchestrated by man.
3. An unlikely individual – Pharaoh's daughter
 - a. Would not be expected to save one of the Hebrews and defy her father's decree!
 - b. Think of the irony of it, the nation which oppressed the Hebrews paid for the bringing up of their deliverer!
 - c. The Divine influence upon her heart – Proverbs 21:1 "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it withersoever he will." The word 'compassion' means to feel with. God used the maternal instincts in this woman to stir her to protect Moses.

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4. The events surrounding the walk of faith for the believer are not cast upon blind fate and chance but are orchestrated by a Sovereign, Almighty God.
5. Hymn – God moves in a mysterious way (Cowper)

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm; Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill; He treasures up his bright designs, and works his sovereign will; Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head; Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for His grace; behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face; His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour; the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower.

6. “Around that frail ark, half lost among the reeds, is cast the impregnable shield of His purpose. All things serve that Will. The current in the full river, the lie of the flags that stop it from being borne down, the hour of the princess’s bath, the direction of her idle glance, the cry of the child at the right moment, the impulse welling up in her heart, the swift resolve, the innocent diplomacy of the sister, the shelter of the happy mother’s breast, the safety of the palace, - all these and a hundred more trivial and unrelated things are spun into the strong cable wherewith God draws slowly but surely His secret purpose into act. So ever His children are secure as long as He has work for them, and his mighty plan strides on to its accomplishment over all the barriers that men can raise.”
(Maclaren)

B. God’s ways are Miraculous – the outcome (Vs. 7-9a)

1. Pharaoh’s daughter defies her father’s edict (Vs. 7-8).
2. Pharaoh’s daughter pay’s Jochebed to raise the baby! (Vs. 9a)
3. We are constantly reminded that our impossibilities are not constraints upon the power of God but occasions for its display and demonstration.

Their faith was a...

V. PREPARING FAITH (VS. 9B-10)

A. The Opportunity for Moses’ Preparation (Vs. 9b-10)

1. Question: If you knew that you only had approximately a 5-year window with your child, how would you teach him/her? Evidently Jochebed used this narrow window of opportunity well to instil truth into little Moses’ heart.
2. In the first 5 years, your child’s brain develops more and faster than at any other time in his life. Your child’s early experiences – the things he sees, hears, touches, smells and tastes – stimulate his brain, creating millions of connections. This is when the foundations for learning, health and behaviour throughout life are laid down.
3. Vladimir Lenin: “Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.”
4. Illustration: The antigod, antichristian agenda in much of our education system today (e.g., Gender Fairy). We are in an all-out war for the minds and hearts of our children today.

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5. Martin Luther: “I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the great gates of hell, unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.”
6. “He who places secular knowledge, and the things of the world, before this study and sacred knowledge, prefers rubbish to treasure: for the mystery of the Gospel is treasure; all else is dung and dross.” (John Davenant)
7. **Challenge:** Parents need to seize the unique opportunity afforded in the child’s formative years to instil the Word of God into their hearts and minds. Be careful about handing that opportunity to people who don’t know Christ, don’t love your child as you do and who may do unrepairable damage by teaching them falsehood. **Mothers, don’t forsake your high calling to be a wife, mother, nurturer and homemaker (Titus 2:5; 1 Tim. 5:14; Prov. 31:10-31).**
8. Imagine the scene when she handed little Moses over: Imagine you are Jochebed. You take your little boy by the hand and you walk out the door of your tiny hovel in the slave’s quarters where you live. Your other children Miriam and Aaron wave goodbye to him. Maybe he reaches for Miriam and cries because he wants to stay and play with her. You walk with him down the middle street to the gate in the wall. The guard there asks you your business and you tell him that Pharaoh’s daughter has summoned the little boy. He lets you pass. Little Moses grabs your hand tighter as you walk down wider, nicer streets past beautifully decorated homes and richly dressed men and women staring as you go by. You come to the door of the palace. A servant grabs your son’s hand and yanks him inside closing the door on you before you even have a chance to say goodbye. Or maybe you are allowed in and you yourself hand him over to Pharaoh’s daughter. He goes to her quiet willingly. He likes her gold bracelets and she smells so sweet. She knows what you are feeling that you many never see him again except at a distance during a ceremony. You walk away leaving your precious son behind. (Excerpt from Jonathan Park Audio Adventure)

B. The Outcome of Moses’ Preparation (Acts 7:22-25; Heb. 11:24-27)

1. Moses went on to be trained in the godless house of Pharaoh. Acts 7:22 “And Moses was learned in **all the wisdom of the Egyptians**, and was mighty in words and in deeds.” Moses would have been trained in linguistics, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, music, medicine, law and the fine art of diplomacy.
2. Despite the fact he was trained in Egyptian wisdom, we get a strong indication that Jochebed used the limited time she had with Moses well. Even after all that secular training, Moses still knew the truth in several key areas:
 - a. Moses knew he was a Hebrew, one of God’s chosen people (Acts 7:23).
 - b. Moses believed God would use him to deliver his people (Acts 7:25).
 - c. Moses, at the age of 40, rejected the wealth and fame of Egypt and chose a life of faith and separation with God’s people (Heb. 11:24-27).
3. Deuteronomy 6:6-8 “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt **teach them diligently**

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unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” As parents we need to cultivate a family culture where the grand and glorious truths of God’s Word are the frequent focus of our discussions.

- a. “teach them diligently” = comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to sharpen or to whet” and is often translated that way in the O.T. For example:
 - i. Deut. 32:41 “*If I **whet** my glittering sword...*”
 - ii. Isaiah 5:28 “*Whose **arrows** are sharp...*”
 - iii. Psalm 45:5 “*Thine **arrows** are sharp...*”
- b. A whetstone is used for the sharpening of tools and is used figuratively for sharpening the wits or the mind. (J. Grant) We even use this sort of language to describe someone with “a sharp mind.”
- c. Children are likened to arrows in Psalm 127:4 – “As **arrows** are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his **quiver** full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”
- d. The word picture implies the need for repetition and regularity in our teaching of the Word of God.
- e. Challenge: Are the minds of our children being sharpened by the Word of God or blunted by the entertainments and philosophies of this world?
- f. F.B. Meyer, writing in 1890 warned: “Some of us dare not enter the theatre, or encourage others to enter...even when a play may be deemed inoffensive and harmless, the sensuous attractions of the place, the glitter, the music, the slightly-dressed figures of the actors and actresses, the entire atmosphere and environment, which appeal so strongly to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, break down some of the fortifications, which would otherwise resist the first incidence and assault of evil. **The air of the theatre, the ball-room, the race-course, seem so impregnated with the nocuous germs and microbes of evil, that it is perilous for the soul to expose itself to them,** conscious as it is of predisposing bias and weakness.”

Conclusion:

1. Who or what is training your children?
2. Are you passionately fulfilling your God given role in your family (e.g., Dads, Mums and siblings)?
3. Are your children getting a Christ-centred, Bible based education? What are your priorities for your children? Do they know Christ?
4. Are we surrendered to God’s will for our children or are our own carnal goals and ambitions getting in the way?