

BAPTISTWAY ADULT BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE®

The Book of Exodus

LIBERATED FOR LIFE IN
COVENANT WITH GOD

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The Book of Exodus: Liberated for Life in Covenant with God—Adult Bible Teaching Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This Teaching Guide

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called “Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities,” and the second is called “Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions.” Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying with your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org on the Resources for Adults page.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church's adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church's adult Bible study teachers don't have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their

own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)

6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class, and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Premium Online Bible Commentary. Plan to get the additional adult Bible study comments available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order *Premium Online Bible Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$6 for individuals and \$25 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive *Premium Online Bible Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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FREE! Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at www.baptistwaypress.org! Watch for them in “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to www.baptistwaypress.org and click on “Teaching Resource Items” for this study. These items are selected from “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for hand-outs and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

IN ADDITION: Enrichment teaching help is provided in the online *Baptist Standard*, which is available at www.baptiststandard.com. The *Baptist Standard* is available online for an annual subscription rate of \$10. Subscribe online at www.baptiststandard.com or call 214-630-4571. A free ninety-day trial subscription is currently available.

Note: The time of the first release of these materials includes Easter. To meet the needs of churches who wish to have a Bible study lesson specifically on the Easter Scripture passages at this time, an Easter lesson is included.

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LESSON ONE
*Women and
Children First*

FOCAL TEXT

Exodus 1:8—2:10

BACKGROUND

Exodus 1:1—2:10

MAIN IDEA

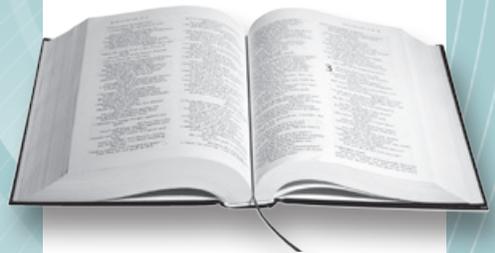
As children faced danger and death, women acted boldly and courageously to overcome Pharaoh's evil plans.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

In what ways should we be taking more action to care for children in our day?

TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to describe how women acted courageously to help children being threatened by Pharaoh and to identify ways they will take action to help children



BIBLE COMMENTS

Understanding the Context

The Book of Exodus records the defining story of the Israelites. Confessions of faith found in passages like Psalms 78, 80, and 105 show the importance of this narrative. The heart of the New Testament is the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The heart of the Old Testament is the story of how God redeemed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and formed a covenant with them. To this day, Jews remember and celebrate this story at Passover.

In the New Testament, the stories of Israel's Exodus from Egypt and the good news of Jesus Christ are intertwined. Jesus was crucified during the time of Passover, and he used elements of the Passover feast to establish the Lord's Supper. In fact, in stories like the feeding of the five thousand, the Gospels depict Jesus leading a new and greater Exodus (see John 6:5–15).

In many ways, the first chapter of Exodus is a continuation of Genesis 37–50. The last section of Genesis sets the stage for the story of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. It tells how Jacob's sons became jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt. After many setbacks and much suffering, Joseph rose to be second only to Pharaoh himself. In a time of famine, Joseph's brothers went to find food in Egypt and were reunited with Joseph. Graciously, Joseph forgave his brothers and gave them the food they needed. Jacob's sons settled in Goshen and prospered.

This family that numbered seventy when Jacob's descendants joined Joseph and his family in Egypt (Genesis 46:8–27) grew to become a group large enough to intimidate the Egyptians in Exodus 1. This first chapter of Exodus begins the remarkable story of how God redeemed a slave people and made them his own, and how God used unlikely people to accomplish it.¹

Interpreting the Scriptures

We can divide Exodus 1:1—2:10 into three main sections: 1:1–7, the growth of Jacob’s family; 1:8–22, Pharaoh’s oppression of the Israelites; and 2:1–10, Moses’ infancy.

The Growth of Jacob’s Family (1:1–7)

Picking up on the narrative of Genesis 37—50, these verses tell how the Israelites became so numerous in Egypt. The terms the account uses in verse 7 echo God’s blessings and promises in Genesis, particularly to the patriarchs (see Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7; 17:2). God was fulfilling those promises.

Pharaoh’s Oppression of the Israelites (1:8–22)

1:8. This verse refers to Egypt’s ruler as “king,” but the Egyptian word for “king” is *pharaoh* (see Exodus 1:19). “Pharaoh” means *great house*.

The date of the Exodus is a subject of debate among biblical scholars. Suggested dates have ranged from the fifteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C. Egyptian records tell us about the pharaohs, but no records found to date mention the events described in Exodus. The biblical record is also fuzzy about when the Israelites left Egypt. Furthermore, the text doesn’t give us the name of either the pharaoh of the oppression or the pharaoh who ruled during the Exodus. First Kings 6:1 says that construction on the temple began 480 years after Israel left Egypt. However, 480 years may be a rounded number indicating twelve generations. Another clue is the construction of Pithom and Rameses, which we can date from Egyptian records (see Exod. 1:11).

The only information the text gives us about the pharaoh of the oppression is that he “did not know about Joseph” (1:8). This means he was unaware of what Joseph had done for Egypt. This may suggest a change of dynasties, which makes some scholars feel that this pharaoh was Rameses II (about 1292–1213 B.C.). But other dynasty changes took place, including the expulsion of the Hyksos around the fifteenth century B.C.

1:9–10. Pharaoh saw the Israelites as an economic asset because they provided labor for his various building projects. At the same time, he

saw them as a potentially destabilizing force. He sought to keep them as an economic asset while weakening them as a political threat.

1:11. Pharaoh began his attempts to weaken the Hebrew population. First, he submitted them to forced labor. Conscripted labor was a common practice among ancient kings. Later, Israelite kings would use it (1 Kings 5:13–14; 9:15; 12:18). The taskmasters were probably Egyptians, but the foremen seem to have been Israelites (Exod. 5:14). The “store cities” Pharaoh conscripted the Israelites to build served as storage points for military purposes. Pithom and Rameses were at strategic locations, guarding the entrances to Egypt from the north and northeast.

1:12. Pharaoh’s attempt to limit the Hebrew population had the opposite effect. The more he oppressed them, the more numerous they became.

1:13–14. The Egyptians became increasingly ruthless, subjecting the Hebrews to slavery.

1:15. “Hebrew” is an old word for Israelite. The Old Testament usually uses it to contrast them with other people (Gen. 14:13; 39:14, 17; 40:15; Exod. 21:2). The use of the term is rare after David’s time. The Old Testament doesn’t use the word “Jew” until after the exile.

“Hebrew midwives” can mean *midwives to the Hebrews* or *midwives who were Hebrews*. The first-century A.D. Jewish historian Josephus understood them to be righteous Gentiles.² Whether they were Hebrews or Gentiles, they obeyed God rather than Pharaoh (1:17).

Shiphrah and Puah were the first of a group of women who played critical roles in Moses’ story. The others were Moses’ mother and sister and Pharaoh’s daughter (2:1–10). Most of these women had scant resources, and yet they were able to thwart the aims of the mighty Pharaoh.

1:16. Pharaoh worsened the oppression by resorting to genocide. Killing males and leaving only females would make it unlikely that the Israelites would be a military threat. Babies represent the future and hope of any people, and tyrants sometimes harm children in order to demoralize an ethnic group. Even today, tyrants do this sort of thing by killing and kidnapping children.

The “delivery stool” was a seat of stone or bricks that women sat on to deliver their babies. The Hebrew word used here comes from a term meaning *stones*.

1:17–21. Because the midwives “feared God,” they disobeyed Pharaoh’s orders. They believed that killing babies would incur God’s wrath. Having children was a great blessing because they were personal assets. They provided support, particularly when their parents were old.

1:22. Frustrated by the cunning of the midwives, Pharaoh decided to murder the male babies directly by having them thrown into the Nile to drown. Ironically, the Nile would be the means by which God would save Moses and have him raised by Pharaoh’s daughter (2:1–10). Furthermore, God would defeat Pharaoh’s army by drowning it (14:28).

Moses’ Infancy (2:1–10)

2:1. This verse doesn’t give the names of Moses’ parents, but Exodus 6:16–20 identifies them as Amram and Jochebed. Later, the house of Levi would be a priestly group.

2:2. Under the dark cloud of Pharaoh’s orders, a Hebrew woman of the house of Levi gave birth to a son. This should have been a joyous moment for her because the Hebrews valued sons highly. But the oppression of the Egyptians made the birth of a Hebrew son a terrible time. Seeing that her son was fine and healthy, she hid him from the Egyptians for three months.

The son wasn’t the Hebrew couple’s first child. Later, we meet an older sister, Miriam (2:5–7; 15:20), and an older brother, Aaron (4:14; 6:20).

2:3. The only other place the Old Testament uses the word translated “basket” is in reference to Noah’s ark (Hebrew of Gen. 7:1). Jochebed made the basket out of papyrus, which grew on the banks of the Nile, and coated it with “tar and pitch.”

2:4. The idiom used to describe what Miriam’s sister did implies more than passive watching. It suggests that Jochebed had a specific plan in

mind. Perhaps she knew that this was where Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe.

As we read the text, we wonder about Moses' father. He seems to have taken no part in the effort to save his son. It's possible that he was involved but not mentioned. It's also possible to explain his absence by the fact that in those days, fathers had little to do with infant children. Child care was the realm of women and girls.

2:5–6. The theme of female compassion carries over to Pharaoh's daughter. She took pity on a crying child.

2:7–9. Although the arrangement described in these verses seems unusual, archeologists have found agreements like this in Ancient Near Eastern documents. Surely Pharaoh's daughter saw through this ruse. If she was aware of what was going on, it shows that she had great compassion on both Moses and his mother.

2:10. Moses is an Egyptian name meaning *gave birth*. It's a shortened form of names compounded with the names of deities, such as Tut-mosis and Rameses. Here, the text interprets the name as being derived from the Hebrew word meaning *draw out*.

The story of Pharaoh's oppression ends in another irony. Moses was rescued by the daughter of the man who ordered that he be put to death.

Focusing on the Meaning

The Book of Exodus shows God fighting against Egyptian oppression from the beginning. When Pharaoh attempted to reduce the Hebrew population with harsh labor, God increased the number of his people. When Pharaoh attempted to kill Hebrew babies through the midwives, the midwives and Hebrew mothers frustrated his plans. When Pharaoh attempted to kill the Hebrew boys by having them thrown into the Nile, his own daughter frustrated his plans by rescuing Moses from the Nile. Although women and children were among the most vulnerable people in the ancient world, God used women to save children, frustrating the plans of one of the most powerful rulers in the world.

This text presents several important lessons. First, God is sovereign over the plans of everyone, even the powerful. Pharaoh attempted to weaken the Hebrews, but God gave them strength. Sometimes we become anxious about world events, wondering whether God is in control. Yet our text shows that even the most powerful people in the world can't prevail over God's purposes.

Second, God selects instruments of deliverance according to his choosing. Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, Miriam, and even Pharaoh's daughter were unlikely heroines. Yet God used them to preserve one of the greatest heroes in the Bible. Although we sometimes feel weak and helpless, God can use us for his purposes.

Third, God cares for the vulnerable. Among the most vulnerable in our world are children. When violence breaks out in the world, children often suffer the most. Children can even be pawns in power struggles. Recently, terrorists kidnapped hundreds of girls in their school and threatened to sell them into marriage. Unfortunately, perhaps by the time you read this there will be other situations in which children are mistreated by people in power. Such mistreatment is a sin against God of the worst sort.

Since we serve the Christ who welcomed children (Luke 18:15–17), we should do all we can to protect children in our world today. This includes making sure that they receive adequate food, clothing, medical care, and education, and standing up for children when they're victims of horrors like war, terrorism, and human trafficking.

TEACHING PLANS

Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities

Connect with Life

1. As you or a volunteer record answers, lead the class to suggest factors or conditions that threaten the safety and well-being of children in

today's world (malnutrition, disease, abuse, neglect, child pornography, sexual predators, etc.).

2. Invite comments about why some people target children for abuse and how violence against children can signify moral decay in a society. If no one mentions it, comment that the innocence, helplessness, and vulnerability of children make them attractive prey for those seeking outlets for lust or anger. Invite comments on ways that some people try to address this problem. (If possible, share news clippings or magazine articles about people involved in humanitarian aid, organizations fighting to end child sex trafficking, world hunger programs, etc.)
3. Make the transition into Bible study by noting that children have been innocent victims for millennia. The story of Moses' birth highlights Pharaoh's cruelty toward children, but it also provides examples of women who were willing to risk their lives to save them.

Guide Bible Study

4. Create a timeline of factors that drove events in Exodus 1:1—2:10. (Small classes can work together on it, but large classes may prefer to have groups work on separate timelines.) While reading through the passage, record the sequence of significant events (Joseph's death; he was forgotten; the new Pharaoh became fearful; Hebrews were enslaved, etc.). Include verse references on each timeline marker.
5. Use the finished timelines for an *if-then* exercise. As you read each marker, pose it as an *if* statement (*If Joseph had been remembered. . . . If Pharaoh had not feared the Hebrews. . . . If the midwives had obeyed Pharaoh. . . , etc.*). For each *if* statement, have the class suggest a possible *then* outcome, and lead the group to discuss how the story might have changed in that case. (Then the Hebrews would have been honored. Then Pharaoh might have left the Hebrews alone or even given some of them administrative positions, and they might eventually have become integrated into Egyptian society. Then Aaron might have died at birth, etc.)

6. Lead the class to discuss how God worked within the context of Egyptian religious beliefs in Moses' story. (For example, God understood that Egyptians would perceive Moses' appearance in the river as an act of the river deity and that it would protect Moses' life and bring him into the royal palace. See the *Study Guide* under the heading, "A Special Child.")
7. Lead the group to discuss possible reasons God allowed everything to happen as it did in this account. Ask how a good God could allow his chosen people to endure such harsh treatment, including the murder of their innocent babies. Discuss the question of why a loving God permits bad things to happen to people who trust him.
8. Invite comments on the roles that Shiphrah, Puah, Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter played in the story. Have the class identify the choice each woman faced, the motive behind each choice, and the danger that resulted from each choice.

Encourage Application

9. Lead members to recall instances where people have put themselves in danger to help others (firefighters in the New York World Trade towers, people who smuggled Jewish children out of Nazi Germany, etc.). Discuss what drives that level of selflessness.
10. Ask how class members would respond if they discovered a child in mortal danger or great need. *Would they act to help or save the child? What if saving the child posed no risk to themselves? What if the need was spiritual?*

Have small groups discuss believers' responsibility for transmitting faith from generation to generation. *What factors cause Christians to be ineffective in teaching or training children? What steps might individuals and churches take to more aggressively save the children?*
11. Close the session with prayer, especially asking for God's help in identifying and addressing needs within the group's sphere of influence.

Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions

Connect with Life

1. Before the session, search for stories of people who risked their lives to save Jewish children from Nazis in World War II.³ Begin the session by briefly summarizing several of the stories. Discuss reasons that protecting children is so important to people in times of crisis.
2. Make the transition into Bible study by commenting that this lesson features women who were willing to risk their lives to protect Israel's children.

Guide Bible Study

3. Enlist someone to read Exodus 1:6–14. Ask why Pharaoh became so alarmed by the growing numbers of Israelites. Call for thoughts on why he decided to enslave them rather than simply to send them out of the Egypt.
4. Invite someone to read Exodus 1:15–22. Discuss question 1 in the *Study Guide*, “Why do you think Pharaoh decided to kill male infants instead of just executing enough adult men to make him feel safer?” As needed, refer to the information in the first paragraph under the heading, “An Intolerable Command (1:15-22).”
5. Discuss questions 2 and 3 in the *Study Guide* (2. “Why would Pharaoh enlist the midwives to kill babies rather than just sending soldiers to gather them up for extermination?” 3. “Were the midwives thinking only of the babies and their mothers when they defied Pharaoh’s order? What would motivate them to risk death for the sake of others?”) Ask members for thoughts on how the midwives’ faith reflected that of the whole Hebrew nation. Ask, *How was it that the Israelites were able to continue honoring and trusting God while they endured such harsh conditions?* Comment on the tendency of Christian faith to flourish in times of persecution (first-century believers, etc.).

6. Call for a volunteer to read Exodus 2:1–10. Compare Jochebed's decision with that of the midwives who disobeyed Pharaoh. Note that she showed similar courage but that her motivation might have differed from theirs. Comment on parents' responsibility for protecting children's spiritual lives as well as their physical well-being. Discuss how Miriam reflected her mother's courage.
7. Discuss the role of Pharaoh's daughter in the story. How did her willing involvement impact Moses' life? Discuss how God used Egyptian superstitions to protect Moses and to accomplish his purpose.

Encourage Application

8. Prepare a list of statements describing actions that might be taken during a crisis situation (*I would stop a parent from beating a child; I would report suspected child abuse to the police; I would place myself between a child and a weapon; I would run into on-coming traffic to grab a child from the street, etc.*). As statements are read aloud, have members raise their hands for statements they consider true for themselves.
9. Repeat the exercise with a second list of statements describing less critical situations (*I would give money to children in need; I would share Jesus with a child I caught picking my pocket; I would tutor a child who struggled with English as a second language, etc.*). In both activities, ask volunteers to explain why they would or would not take action.
10. Note that children have many different needs. We as individuals cannot meet all the needs, but we can follow the examples of women in Moses' story to act within our power and circumstances.
11. Close by asking God for heightened sensitivity to the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of children, and for courage to follow God's leading to address their needs.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).
2. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, II.9.2. See <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-2.htm>. Accessed 7/21/14.
3. Research, for example, Corrie ten Boom, Oskar Schindler, and/or Nicholas Winton.