

JOCHEBED: TRUSTING GOD WITH YOUR MOST VALUED POSSESSION

May 7, 2023

▶ CONNECT

As you begin your group, take time to look back and answer the following questions:

How did God's Word speak to you this week?

Where do you see God at work in your life?

There are times in life when we reach our limit. You may reach the limit of your abilities. You don't have the skill or expertise to fix the leaky faucet. You may reach the limit of your efforts. You've tried and failed time after time to get through to your daughter, but she remains closed off to you. You may reach the limit of your knowledge. You can't understand the immense complexities regarding the project your boss is asking you to deliver to him by the deadline.

There are times in life when we are resolved to say, "I just can't. No matter how hard I try, how much I attempt to learn and understand, and how much I try to get it done, I simply can't." Reaching your limit isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, reaching your limit can be a great thing, because it creates a golden opportunity — *to trust God to watch over and handle the things you can't*. This week we're starting a new series looking at strong women in the Bible and what we can learn from them.

Briefly share about a time when you reached the limit of your abilities, efforts, or knowledge and what you learned about yourself from that experience.

GROW

This week we're going to look at Jochebed, the mother of Moses. When Moses was born, Jochebed risked her life to hide her son and keep him alive. When she reached her limit and couldn't hide him any longer, she made a wicker basket, put her baby boy in it, placed him among the reeds on the Nile, and had her daughter stand at a distance to see what would happen.

Jochebed loved her son, but there was nothing more she could do but put Moses, her most valued possession, in the basket and trust God with what happened next. By doing so, Moses' life was spared when Pharaoh's daughter found him and took pity on him. Jochebed's bold move paid off because she trusted God to watch over her son and handle what she couldn't.

Read Exodus 2:1-10 as a group. Make observations about the passage by answering questions like:

- *What do you see? What do you find interesting or insightful? Is there something new you learned or hadn't seen before?*

- *What is the author's main point? How does he make it?*
- *What lesson am I meant to learn from this passage (or story)?*

Next, ask what this passage says about God, us, and you.

- *What does this passage say about God? What does it say about His character and activity in our lives and in the world?*
- *What does this passage say about us? What does it reveal about human nature, that everyone is made in the image of God but is also affected by sin?*
- *What does this passage say about you? How does it directly apply to my identity, worth, and purpose in life?*

▶ SHARE

Like Jochebed, there are times for each of us when we must put the people and things we hold near and dear to us "in the basket." It might be a friend or family member. Maybe it's a job or position. Or maybe it's a dream or desire. Whatever it is, God is telling you, "Put it in the basket and trust me. Let me keep watch and handle what you can't. I can do far more than you could ever possibly imagine."

You can never go wrong when you trust God. Whatever it is that God is asking you to put in the basket, you can have rock-solid confidence that God's plans and purposes are for your good, your growth, and His glory. Don't miss out on seeing God do far more than you could ever possibly imagine. Go ahead. Put it in the basket.

Think of someone or something you need to put in the basket. Take a moment in silent prayer with the Father and release whatever it is to Him in trust.

What could you start doing to exercise your "trust muscle" more with God? What difference might that make in your life?

What might you miss out on if you fail to trust God and put something or someone in the basket?

In what ways has our conversation challenged you to live differently? Be specific.

Think of someone who needs to hear that God wants to give us true peace and rest. How could you share this truth with them?

▶ PRAY

As we prepare to leave group tonight, we desire to step out and live a Jesus-centered life and submit to the Spirit (Romans 8:6-8). Take time to reflect on this past week and set intentions for next week by answering the following questions:

- *How have you fed your spirit this week?*
- *What are ways you drifted to feeding your flesh?*

Take a few moments to pray for each other and for God's continued growth in those areas

► DISCOVER MORE

EXODUS 2:1-10 OVERVIEW

Into the context of births and deaths come Moses' parents. They are not named until the genealogy of Moses and his brother, Aaron, is given in chapter 6. Moses' father is called Amram, a descendant of Levi. He married his aunt, his father's sister, Jochebed (6:20), in one of these relationships which God would later condemn (Lev. 18:12). Yet, although there was sin here, grace was working all the more, in order to preserve the future leader and redeemer of Israel alive.

Amram and Jochebed did not obey Pharaoh's command. They kept Moses safe as long as they could, then made special provision for him, by constructing a watertight device that could hide Moses among the bulrushes of the Nile. All the time, Miriam, his daughter, kept watch on the basket in which her brother lay.

One day, the princess came to bathe and found the basket. On discovering Moses, she recognized what was going on, but, in response to Miriam's request, was willing that Moses should be brought up under her guardianship, nursed by his own mother.

There was *faith* here, which Moses' parents exercised in God, believing that he was able to work out all things for them. It was faith that was *tested* by Pharaoh's decree; how long these days seemed! In one sense, it was easy to have faith when Moses could be seen and protected at home, but it was something else to commit him to God's care and the waters of the Nile! Yet God gave grace for this trial.

And what a remarkable *providence* it was that brought Pharaoh's daughter to the very spot where Moses lay in the basket. God's timing and his methods are all exactly right. In what way but this might it have been possible for Moses' own mother to bring him up? And who would have thought that the redeemer of God's people would have been nurtured and trained in the palace of the very king who was trying to oppress them!¹

EXODUS 2:1-4

An unnamed couple from the family of Levi become the parents of Moses. Since Levi's son Kohath was born before the family moved to Egypt (Ge 46:11), where they stayed for 430 years of bondage (Ex 12:40–41), and since Moses was eighty years old at the Exodus (7:7), he was born some 350 years after Kohath's time. Hence, if Amram was Kohath's "son" (6:18) and Jochebed was Levi's "daughter" (Nu 26:59), the meaning of these terms must be in the permissible ancient Near Eastern sense of "ancestor" or lineal descendant; otherwise the narrative becomes increasingly awkward. For example, during Moses' lifetime Moses' "grandfather" would be said to have fathered 8,600 males (not counting females), of which 2,750 are between the ages of thirty and fifty years old—all of this up to the time of one year after the Exodus (cf. Nu 3:19, 27–28)!

It is best, then, in conformity with usual biblical reckoning and methods of recording genealogies (cf. William Henry Green, "Primaeval Chronology," *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], 13–28), to allow for several gaps in the four generations that spanned the almost four hundred years from Joseph to Moses (cf. *NIV Study Bible* note on 6:20; Gispén, 77, n. 10). Houtman, 270–71, claims

END NOTES

1. Iain D. Campbell, *Opening up Exodus, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 26–27.

that it is unlikely that the Hebrew can mean something other than “the daughter of Levi”; however, he is aware that that will create problems in connection with Exodus 12:40, but he is sure that “it was not the writer’s intention to present a complete and harmonious chronological picture.” Only by speculating that there is a plurality of writers and sources can one assume such inconsistencies within the text.

Moses is not the firstborn or oldest child, as the story may at first seem to imply; his brother Aaron is three years older and his sister Miriam is a young girl already. The fact that he is a “fine child” (v. 2) may relate to his physical appearance (cf. Ge 39:6) as well as to the qualities of his heart (cf. Ac 7:20, *asteios tō theō*, “fair in the sight of God” [NIV mg.]; and Hebrews 11:23, *asteion paidion*, “fair, proper child” [NIV, “no ordinary child”]). Muslim tradition assigns many miracles to the night when Moses was born—statues in the temples of Egypt toppled and Pharaoh had an ominous dream that called for his repentance to God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

When Moses’ mother can hide him no longer, she fashions a basketlike boat from papyrus reeds and caulks it with pitch to make it watertight (v. 3; see Notes for Egyptian background to these terms). The word “ark, box, chest” is likely borrowed from an Egyptian word (see C. Cohen, “Hebrew *tbh*: Proposed Etymologies,” *JANESCU* 4 [1972]: 36–51). This little “ark” is “covered with asphalt, bitumen,” a rendering that regards this expression as a denominative verb. The effect is one of caulking the improvised vessel so as to make it waterproof. It is said the ark is coated “with tar and pitch,” but these two terms form a hendiadys; therefore the two terms should be rendered as the LXX does with the one word: “asphalt.”

Many scholars have been impressed by a similar story about another Semite—Sargon of Akkad from the second half of the third millennium BC. In this case, his father was unknown and his mother a high priestess, who bore him in secret. He, too, was put on a river, which carried him along in a basket of rushes coated with pitch. He was pulled from the river by Akki, the gardener and drawer of water, who rescued him and raised him as his son (*ANET*, 119). The goddess Ishtar gave Sargon her love; thus he became king. But to argue that the story was borrowed from Sargon and later attached to Moses to give him greater credibility in the light of his later accomplishments (so in part, Beegle, 53) is to impose categories on the text rather than to discover them evidentially. The differences between the two stories are more striking than the similarities. (See B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who was Exposed at Birth* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980], 149ff. Also cf. D. B. Redford, “The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child,” *Numen* 14 [1982]: 209–28.)

Clearly, Moses’ mother has something else in mind besides child abandonment or exposure, for each individual action denotes love and hope for deliverance. The intricate detail is a “beautiful illustration of the connection which should always exist between the diligent use of means and a pious trust in providence. Instead of sitting down in sullen despair, or passive dependence on divine interposition to do all the work, everything is done which can be done by human agency” (Bush, *Exodus*, 1:25).²

EXODUS 2:5-6

There was surely no attempt to place Moses in his little ark at a location where he was likely to be discovered. The whole intent was just the opposite. Yet he was discovered—and by an Egyptian! In the story’s surprising twist, however, the

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2. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Exodus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 356–357.

discovery by an Egyptian, under other conditions likely to lead to the boy's death, leads instead to a perfect protection of his life. This is God at work, providing deliverance in an unanticipated yet wonderful way.

Pharaoh's daughter is described as going "down" to the Nile simply because that was always necessary, all housing being built on higher ground as protection against the Nile's overflowing its banks annually. We have no way of knowing how many daughters this pharaoh had, but there may have been dozens, and the popular idea that Moses was one of just a few favored grandchildren of the pharaoh lacks the merit of realism. Nevertheless, to be found and then cared for by one so highly placed could result at least in protection from the program against the Hebrews and guarantee at least a fine opportunity for survival. That the princess would choose to bathe in the Nile as opposed to a bathtub reflects the esteem of the pantheistic Egyptians for the sacredness of that river, an issue only hinted at here but of great importance to the later aspects of the story (chaps. 4; 7).

The attendants were on guard, thus not bathing; the princess alone was in the water and able to spot the little ark from her angle. Again the better translation is "ark" rather than "basket"; almost any ancient Israelite would catch the significance of the use of *tēbāh* here, regardless of whether the story was read or heard. Sending a servant girl to retrieve it merely reflects the fact that the ark would have been placed where it could be reached from the shore, and the princess did not choose to wade through several feet of reed to get it herself when it could be easily pulled from the water by one of those already on shore. The fact that the boy was crying when the princess opened the lid may be a clue to how she noticed the ark in the first place; she may have heard the crying and then looked for its source. At any rate, here was not a woman inclined toward her father's cold-blooded population control program. She simply felt concern for a little boy who was crying. One imagines, in fact, Moses' adoptive mother telling him the story of his rescue many times—and how precious he seemed to her the first moment she set eyes on him. Her recognition that Moses was a Hebrew boy (*yeled*, which the NIV unfortunately neuterizes both times in this verse to "baby") probably was predicated on four things at least: the general physical differences between Hebrews and Egyptians, the type of baby clothes used, the fact that her discovery occurred in an Israelite settlement area, and the general situation (the need to hide Israelite baby boys but not Egyptian baby boys).³

EXODUS 7-10

2:7–9 As someone from the population of slaves in Egypt, it took significant courage for Moses' **sister** to presume to speak to **Pharaoh's daughter** (v. 7). Her bold move ends up bringing about a situation that surely Moses' mother could not have imagined possible when she hid him: she is paid **wages** to nurse her own son (v. 9).

2:10 Moses. In Hebrew, the name sounds like the verb *mashah*, "to draw out" (see ESV footnote). The name may also be related to the common Egyptian word for "son." Since Pharaoh's daughter clearly knows that Moses is a Hebrew child (vv. 6–9), it is possible that she chose the name for both its Hebrew ("drawn out of water") and Egyptian ("son") senses. The irony of such a dual reference would be that her action not only prefigures but is also a part of the means that God uses to "draw" Israel as his "son" out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1). The narrator tells nothing of what it was like for Moses in Pharaoh's household: Did Pharaoh know of Moses' origin? **Why did he allow one of his daughters to adopt a child at all?** Did the daughter marry? The attentive reader may guess at **answers to these questions, but the absence of further**

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3. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 90–91.

comment probably shows that the narrator did not intend to supply these details. It would seem likely that the daughter never told Pharaoh the truth about Moses' origin, but this can only be surmised.⁴

▶ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Iain D. Campbell, *Opening Up Exodus*, Opening Up Commentary.

D.A. Carson, *Exodus*, NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible.

John D. Hannah, "Exodus," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*.

Kenneth Laing Harris, *Exodus*, The ESV Study Bible.

Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*.

Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary.

END NOTES

4. Kenneth Laing Harris, *Exodus, The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 146–147.