

**THERE'S MORE TO MOTHERING****Exodus 1:8-2:10**

**Intro:** As I investigated the possibility of preaching a series from Exodus over the coming summer, a series I hoped to begin in a couple weeks, I discovered, in the first two chapters of Exodus, a Mother's Day message floating in the Nile. So I'm beginning my Exodus series this morning.

A few comments about the Exodus series before I begin. As I look at it now, and the Holy Spirit may very well make needed adjustments, I plan to preach from the first 25 chapters of Exodus. And, this time, rather than taking it verse by verse or chapter by chapter, as I often do as I preach through a book of the Bible, I'm going to proceed through Exodus account by account. So, some messages may span several chapters and others may use much shorter portions of the book. A way you can familiarize yourself with coming messages would be to read ahead. In fact, read the entire book of 40 chapters over the coming months – better yet, read it several times. You will grow because of it.

Now for today's message, here is the text:

**(Read Exodus 1:8-2:10)**

You can see here in this passage the reason for my title, THERE'S MORE TO MOTHERING as we see examples of strong women who lead out of their inborn mothering instinct as God directed their steps to carry out his perfect plan. I'm going to proceed in the order these mother figures come in the Exodus account.

We begin Exodus with a transition from Genesis that ended with the Children of Israel in Egypt where they were sitting out a famine in the region. Because of the favor they enjoyed because of Joseph's rescue of Egypt, his family was given the most fertile part of Egypt. In the ensuing generations they had flourished and their number had grown astronomically. Now, where I picked up at verse 8 we read that a new Pharaoh had come to power who knew nothing and certainly cared little about the blessing the Children of Israel had once been to Egypt. This new leadership saw the Hebrews as a threat and their paranoia drove them to irrational fear and then to outright persecution. Where Israel had once enjoyed peace and prosperity, they now were slaves at hard labor.

Despite this oppression the Hebrews prospered and so Egypt's paranoia grew accordingly. Actually it was well-founded. You see, no matter what the world throws at the people of God, we flourish anyway – it was true then and it's true now.

As a result, the plan to subdue God's people took a murderous turn – kill babies. In verses 15-16 we see Pharaoh tell the Hebrew midwives to murder all male babies at birth and this was the beginning of the end for him. Actually, killing babies is fatal move for any society – for example one does not have to look very far to see that abortion brings only heartache and violence rather than any kind of improvement to one's life or to society. F. B. Meyer wrote *"There is nothing which so closely and instantly touches national well-being as the treatment of the children."* But the edict went out anyway, *Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."* Exodus 1:15-16. And in response . . .

**The Hebrew midwives obeyed God rather than men**

- They followed their mothering instinct and defied the death sentence where they actually risked their lives to protect life. In Acts, Peter and John had been arrested for preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ and when they were told to never do it again, they responded with, *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."* Acts 4:19-20. They were carrying on a family tradition – like some courageous women 1200 years before they were making a stand for life, only in their case it was eternal life – but they did their grandmothers proud.
- And look at the strategy they used. They cited a miracle – *"Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."* Exodus 1:19. Was it a lie? It doesn't say that. In fact it says that *God dealt well with the midwives* Exodus 1:20 and that he actually rewarded them. It says that he actually gave them children of their own, *And because the*

*midwives feared God, he gave them families.* Exodus 1:21. Regardless, God rewarded them for saving babies' lives by giving them babies of their own.

- It was Midwives and Hebrew moms 1, Pharaoh 0. So Pharaoh upped the ante – every Hebrew baby was to be thrown into the Nile. So Hebrew moms like . . .

### **Moses's mom stepped up**

- We are not even given her name at this point (according to Exodus 6:20 her name was Jochebed) but she found a plan to cast her little boy into the Nile and have him live. She would have figured something out anyway because that's what a mom's fierce love does – it finds a way.
  - In the summer of 1965 I was swimming with my brothers in the creek near our home when I stepped on a rusty nail in a board I was using as a bridge in the muddy water. By that evening it was infected horribly painful. It got worse and less than two days later it was revealed I had gas gangrene and the doctor wanted me to go to the hospital. Well, just two years before I had spent a week in the hospital with a horrific concussion and it had been traumatic for a five year old who'd never been away from home, and in a day when parents had to leave when visiting hours were over. So as I heard Dr. Hess say to my mom, "*He needs to go to the hospital now, Kathryn*" I collapsed into my mom's side and sobbed and begged for it not to happen. And my mom didn't hesitate with her response, "*Can I care for him at home, Ivan?*" and knowing my mom and me, Dr. Hess allowed me to go home and with treatment and my mom's loving care – I was on the mend in a couple days. My mom found a way.
- Moses's mom kept him home for three months and then she made an ark. Listen, *When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.* Exodus 2:3. Something I never realized before was that the word used for "basket" here in the Hebrew is the same word used for Noah's ark. It is the only time the word is used – here for a basket and any time Noah's ark is referred to – and it was very appropriate – both were vessels that brought deliverance and preserved a people. That just a little aside.
- And isn't it cool how Jochebed did it? Male babies were to be thrown in the Nile so she placed her boy in the Nile. After all Pharaoh didn't say anything about babies in baskets, did he? Moses got off on a technicality – but more so on his Mama's ingenuity. A mother's fierce love made a way.
- Jochebed had her daughter, Moses's big sister, Miriam, watch over him as he floated among the reeds along the edge of the Nile.
- It was now Hebrew Moms 2, Pharaoh 0
- And then . . .

### **Moses cried**

- And it was because of a bath, proving that boys have cried about baths for thousands of years. Well, they have certainly resisted them. Remember that terrible concussion I referenced earlier – that happened to me when I was running from my big sister who was trying to capture me for my Saturday night bath and I backed away from her and fell backwards about ten feet into a concrete stairwell. I wasn't crying that time as I ran from my bath – in fact, they say I was laughing as I thought I'd successfully escaped. But I digress – because this wasn't Moses's bath – it was none other than Pharaoh's daughter who was bathing in the Nile when she heard a baby crying and she discovered Moses in his little ark.
- She knew he was a Hebrew. As an Egyptian she was conditioned to despise the Hebrews. As Pharaoh's daughter she knew his murderous edict that sentenced Hebrew baby boys to death and worse, death by drowning. But her mothering instinct kicked into overdrive and she had nothing but love for this three month old Moses – so she rescued him.
- That same instinct never noticed that a little Hebrew girl was there almost immediately to offer the perfect Hebrew wet nurse for the hungry baby. She just knew he needed mothering – so she did what mothers do. She did what was best for this little boy. Her compassion opened her heart and later her home as she would raise him in the royal palace as her own son so that he knew all about the Hebrews AND all about the Egyptians. That was pretty handy when God called him. But that's the next sermon. In the meantime, in David Guzik's words, *God had this beautifully planned for the deliverance of both Moses, and eventually*

*for the people of Israel. He skillfully guided the parents of Moses, the currents of the Nile, and the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to further His plan and purpose.*

- And the score was Moms 3, Pharaoh 0

**Conclusion:** It's time to wrap this up so you mothers can go home to a meal prepared by someone else. Let me just reiterate how I began this interesting journey through the love that is ever present in mothering. It is the mothering instinct that comes out in strong, godly women that shows there is more to mothering. There are mothers at heart who courageously stand for children regardless of whether or not they have birthed them. There are the birth mothers who fiercely do what's best for their children even at danger of their own loss. And there are adoptive mothers who see a need and their motherly instinct drives them to mother with an irrepressible fervor. It's a gift and the gift is ours. One commentator put it like this, "*You cannot destroy the spirit of the people of God. And because of that, you cannot destroy the spirit of a godly woman.*" I think that's a perfect summation. Happy Mother's Day! Amen.