

WEEK 11 **MOTHERING GREATNESS:** 05.13.18 **JOCHEBED AND MARY**



FOCUS VERSE

Hebrews 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.

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 2:1-3, 5-8

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

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5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

6 And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

Luke 1:30-35, 38

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

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38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.



FOCUS THOUGHT

Mothers shape the next generation and through it, they touch the future.



CULTURE CONNECTION

Raising Royalty

In 2016 Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her ninetieth birthday. All of Great Britain joined in the celebration. When she was just a child, Elizabeth's father, Prince Albert, became King George VI after his brother abdicated the throne. In 1952, upon the death of her father, Elizabeth became the queen of Great Britain.

One picture of Elizabeth shows her sitting in a corner reading a book at age fourteen. She looks so serene, so peaceful. As her mother watched the coronation on June 2, 1953, I wonder if she hoped she had prepared her daughter for this moment. Elizabeth became Great Britain's queen at the age of twenty-six and is the longest-reigning monarch in Great

Britain's history.

There is a saying, "You never know what is in your basket." When raising our children, we should remember they are not ordinary. They are destined for greatness. They belong to the King of kings. They are heirs to the throne of glory. We may be raising pastors, missionaries, or faithful servants of God. As we instill God's purpose in them, along with a vision for greatness, we can have the assurance we are pointing our children in the right direction by training them in the way they should go. The Scripture assures us that when they are old, they will not depart from it. (See Proverbs 22:6.)

OUTLINE

- I. THE GODLY ADVANTAGE
- II. TIMES AND CALLINGS OF GREATNESS
- III. THE INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION OF MOTHERS
 - A. Jochebed
 - B. Mary
 - C. Principles of Mothering

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

Children learn most of what they need to succeed in life before the age of five. Many of their habits, character traits, motor skills, and learning processes are developed in these formative years. Ideally, this is a time when children are at home with their mothers. Mothers guide little hands trying to toss a ball or maneuver a spoon. Mothers repeat words to help young children learn how to talk. It takes time and repetition to train children in the development of social skills. A mother dedicated to influencing greatness in her children will take the time needed to make it happen. There is no greater joy for a mother than to see that her adult children are successful and

happy. A mother's influence lives on as her children experience successes and failures.

Jochebed and Mary were mothers of the two great lawgivers: Moses and Jesus. They were mothers of strong faith who raised their children to assume their God-ordained roles of leadership. The highest compliment of Heaven for these mothers was that God would place into their trust the responsibility of raising these children of greatness.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. THE GODLY ADVANTAGE

"The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world" is a famous phrase from a poem penned by William Ross Wallace and first published in 1865. Many have pondered Wallace's words and quoted parts of his poem as they contemplated the powerful impact of a mother in the life of a child. Perhaps only time will tell the full scale a mother's influence has on her children.

Children raised by godly parents have a distinct advantage in life. A mother teaches her children many wonderful attributes, manners, and traditions. While these areas are important for a child's upbringing, a mother

who bases her philosophy of life on godly principles will not only impart truths that establish great standards for good citizens but will also breed a passion for the things of God in her children.

Many books are available that teach parents how to raise children, but those based on biblical principles give children the best tools for life. The Bible is a great source for parenting wisdom, giving guidance in the development of moral character, balanced discipline, and preparing children with the necessary tools to become successful when they step out on the pathway of life.

The hectic rush of everyday life robs many mothers of the time they need to spend with their children teaching them the principles of God's Word. Many times a working mom finds herself with only a few precious moments each day with her children. However, a lot can be accomplished in a short time.

In the biblical story of Moses, we learn of his mother, Jochebed, who had limited time with her son in his infancy. She had to do a quick work instilling the most important things in life in her child. She was given permission to nurse Moses until he was weaned, which was generally from three to five years old for Hebrew children of that era. When Moses was weaned, Jochebed had to hand him over to Pharaoh's daughter to be raised as her son. This was the only way Jochebed could save Moses' life from the edict of death by a relentless Pharaoh.

Jochebed could only trust in God as the day came when she relinquished Moses into the care of Pharaoh's daughter to be raised in a home and lifestyle that was contrary to everything she valued as a Hebrew. He would live among those who did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, the things he had been taught by his mother as a child stayed with him. "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24-25).

As we look at Moses' life, we can see the wisdom from the writer of Proverbs: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs

22:6). After years of living in the plush environment of Egyptian royalty, Moses' heart and steps were turned toward the God of his mother and the instruction he received as a child. Little did Jochebed know she was grooming a life for greatness when she rocked baby Moses in her arms after feeding time. Perhaps the songs she sang as she rocked him to sleep included the lyrics of the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

II. TIMES AND CALLINGS OF GREATNESS

One of two notable times in history that God called an individual to be a deliverer was when the children of Israel cried out for deliverance from the oppression of Pharaoh in Egypt. During that time Pharaoh called for all the male infants to be killed. His intention was to cripple the power of the Hebrews to rebel and thus sentence them forever to a life of slavery in Egypt. God had another plan and inspired a Hebrew mother, Jochebed, to reject the king's commandment and do all she could to preserve the life of her child. She saw potential in her offspring and felt greatness in her child. Through the faith of his parents, Moses was spared from destruction and raised in the very house of the one who oppressed them. The kingdom that oppressed God's people was the dynasty that would experience God's judgment for subjecting them to bondage. Victory was achieved through the child God ordained to be the deliverer of His people.

Another oppressive historical event calling for a deliverance was when Israel was subjected to the tyranny of the Roman Empire. The people of Israel looked for release from their oppression and sought a messiah. In the midst of political turmoil, a baby was born in miraculous circumstances. After the visitation and promise of an angel, the child was born to a chosen virgin girl named Mary.

Mary's faith in God and His promise of the Messiah gave her the strength to withstand whatever was required for this miracle baby to be born. The child was born in a stable and placed in a manger, an unlikely place for a future king. The advent of the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of many prophecies and the hope of Israel.

King Herod determined to destroy all the male Hebrew children in an effort to thwart the rising of the King of the Jews. Again, God had a plan. After receiving direction from an angel in a dream, Joseph whisked Mary and Jesus away to Egypt for safety. Ironically, they found protection in the same country that had once been a place of oppression. After King Herod died, an angel again appeared in a dream and directed Joseph to take the young family and return to Israel. Joseph found a safe place in Nazareth where Jesus could be nurtured and taught by a mother who had witnessed the greatest miracle of all. Mary had the prime opportunity to put truth into the heart of Jesus as a child. Mary knew He was God's son, literally God in flesh, but He was also human. He was just as much man as He was God.

Mary used every opportunity she had with Jesus to teach Him what He needed to learn. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). She fostered greatness in Him, which gave Him the confidence to amaze the teachers in the Temple at the age of twelve. Jesus would have been great anyway, because He was God manifest in the flesh. God made the Incarnation physically believable allowing an amazing mother to be His first earthly teacher.

The primary role of mothers is to prepare their children for life. The crises faced by these two mothers brought to the forefront the greatness hidden within each of them. Jochebed risked everything to save the life of her baby. Mary risked everything to accept her selection as the virgin mother of the Christ child. In many cases, danger or challenges bring out unknown greatness in individuals. When a person rises to the challenge, persevering in conflict, and allows God to be glorified in the situation, others can see that greatness on display. Even in this present generation, God is calling for greatness in His followers. Crisis cannot be avoided. But when it comes, watch how God amplifies greatness in His people.

III. THE INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION OF MOTHERS

The influence of a mother begins in the home. Long before a child ventures out into the world, valuable lessons are learned on the

knees of a mother. God chose two great women to be the mothers of two great leaders. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were great women of faith before their pregnancies that brought two destined deliverers into the world. Greatness in God is directly connected to the greatness of those who precede us as parents, educators, and leaders.

Mary was a young woman of great faith. To be chosen to bear the body of the coming Messiah was a great honor, but with it came great responsibility. Mary dealt with the shame and reproach of becoming pregnant during her betrothal to Joseph. The Law gave Joseph the right to break the betrothal with Mary at the least, and at the worst to have her put to death. A visitation from an angel greatly helped Joseph make the right decision, but he also knew this woman he was planning to marry. She was faithful and devoted to God. Mary could indeed be the choice of God to bring forth the Messiah. Mary had a greatness in her that set her apart from all the other young women who could have been chosen by God. Her greatness was exemplified when she responded to the Holy Spirit, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

A. Jochebed

Times were difficult for Amram and his wife, Jochebed. The Pharaoh of Egypt ordered all male babies to be drowned in the Nile river. (See Exodus 1:22.) When Jochebed gave birth to Moses, she put a plan in action to save this precious life. For three months she and her family hid Moses. Early on, Jochebed saw that "Moses was a goodly child" (Exodus 2:2). In other words, he was healthy and beautiful. She knew in her spirit that a watery grave was not to be in his future.

When he became too big to hide any longer, Jochebed acted in faith to protect him by preparing a waterproof basket. She hid him among the reeds along the edge of the Nile River. Soon the baby was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter as she came to the river to wash. He was obviously a Hebrew baby, but she was smitten with the infant and purposed to take him for her own. She knew she would need someone to nurse him, so when the opportunity came, Miriam, Moses' sister,

who had been watching close by, volunteered her mother. She was summoned to meet Pharaoh's daughter, who asked Jochebed to care for the child. Although it was only for a few short years, Jochebed had the privilege of teaching her son the godly principles that remained with him for life.

B. Mary

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, the angel told her that her son would be great. Mary was chosen to bear the child that would become the long-awaited Messiah. She would give birth to this precious gift from Heaven, and she would also be the one to impart the teachings and tools that prepared Him for His mission in life. Jesus was born with greatness in His destiny and deity in His DNA. Perhaps Mary was the only one who truly knew this. She experienced the miracle of being overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. In that moment, her understanding of the greatness of this little human being must have been a beautiful revelation.

From the moment Jesus was born, Mary did everything she could to facilitate that greatness. Mary was influential in Jesus' early life and was a witness to a miracle when He launched His ministry at the wedding in Cana. She was at the cross when He was crucified. She believed in the ministry and purpose of her son. The fact that Mary was among the 120 on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out is proof that she believed in His words and submitted herself to His purpose.

C. Principles of Mothering

Personal righteousness and integrity before God. The residue of a mother's personal journey with God has great effect on her children. When a mother humbles herself before God and allows Him to cover her in His righteousness, it stands to reason that her children will benefit. As the Word of God speaks into her life, it is natural for her to share that life-changing Word with others. She especially imparts to her children the great truths she learns from serving God. As she follows after the principles of God's Word and examines her walk with God, she has a clearer focus of what is

most important to pass on to her family.

Vision and hope for the future. Naturally a mother wants her children to be successful in life. She may spend time dreaming about what the future holds for each of them. Her dream for one may be to become a doctor and for another to be a missionary. However, the foundation for the hopes and dreams of a godly mother is the fact that she knows God has already formed a path for her children. If she teaches them to follow God, their future is secure.

God has great thoughts for our future just as He did for the exiles in Babylon: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV).

A mother who aligns her vision and hope for her children with God's thoughts toward them knows she is not guiding them alone. She has fallen in step with the One who has her children's best interests at heart and also has the power to guide their steps.

Knowledge of the Word of God. Many great resources are available to help parents in raising their children. There are books on raising strong-willed children, books on how to connect with stepchildren and foster kids, and books on raising boys and raising girls. There are books on understanding the personality traits of children and the love languages for kids. These are all great helps in the journey of childrearing.

However, the most powerful tool in the hands of a mother is the Word of God. This Word that we have come to love and revere is more than text on pages. It is alive. It is God-breathed. It is a sharp sword and a powerful weapon: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

A mother who equips her mind with the knowledge of the Word of God not only finds helpful reading material, but as she imparts that Word to her children, she is allowing them to experience the words of almighty God. God's Word speaks through her. It helps her children decipher right from wrong and gives

them a moral standard with which to pattern their lives. Sharing her knowledge of the Word of God creates an appetite in her children to know it for themselves. As she guides them to memorize important verses of Scripture about who God is (Deuteronomy 6:4), His direction in their lives (Proverbs 3:5–6), the way of salvation (Acts 2:38), and other beautiful promises, she is showing them how to hide God’s Word in their hearts.

Faith and fearlessness. The Word of God puts great emphasis on faith. The writer of Hebrews defines the importance of faith in our walk with God: “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” (Hebrews 11:6).

God would not require something so vital to be impossible to acquire. Faith is not difficult to come by. In fact, in Romans 12:3 we learn that God has given everyone a measure of faith, and in Matthew 17:20 Jesus declared that if we have as little faith as a grain of mustard seed, we could move a mountain and nothing would be impossible. A godly mother teaches her children how to use faith through her own faith lessons. A mother who equips her children with faith will indeed give them more than she could have dreamed. Faith in God brings about trust in Him that can come no other way.

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul outlined a whole arsenal of weapons against the enemy. (See Ephesians 6:10–18.) Using these weapons of warfare, a mother is able to pull down the very strongholds of the enemy with her faith. In this passage, part of the armor is her shield, calling it a “shield of faith.” Paul speaks of the shield of faith being the tool that can protect her from every device the enemy has to destroy her: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16).

A mother stands in the gap for her children against the enemy and knows the feeling of fearless faith. As her faith builds, she becomes fearless in battle and teaches her children to do the same. She shows her children that no matter how intense the battle becomes and how hopeless it looks, we have a secret

weapon; we have almighty God standing by our sides and fighting the battle for us. Faith allows us to know that God is going to keep His word: “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Protectiveness and provision. God placed a natural tendency in mothers to nurture. It is as natural as cradling babies in their arms. Many women who have never had the opportunity to have biological children also have the natural ability to nurture and care for other children.

When God created Eve, He gave her the ability to create a being in her body after conception. Eve was made in the likeness of God, just as Adam was, so this gift God gave her was a part of His being. As a woman, a mother nurtures and protects her child with this God given inner gift. God also gave her the natural ability to provide sustenance for her newborn through nursing. As a child grows and no longer needs the provisions from a mother’s body, she moves into a more independent mode of providing for her child.

Titus 2:5 says that women are “keepers at home.” In contemporary culture, many mothers may have to help earn a living, but the core responsibility of providing for the family usually falls on the father. However, similar to a mother bird, the primary nurturing aspect of making a nest comfortable and safe naturally falls on the mother.

Continued support and presence. As a mother’s children grow up and are able to make decisions on their own, sometimes she feels she no longer has an influence in their lives. But no matter how old a child becomes, the support and affirmation of a mother is vital to the success of that child. A child may start to make decisions the mother does not approve of. However, a mother can show support and love for a child and not have to approve of every decision that child makes.

Our aim as parents is to train our children to think on their own. We try to equip them to make good decisions, but one bad decision should not result in rejection. Children should know that even in the midst of a life marred by wrong decisions, they can come to their mother and her arms are always open.

Releasing the child into God's hands to accomplish His will. Baby dedication services are special events in the lives of Christian parents. That is the time when the parents are challenged to do all they can to raise these little ones in the fear of the Lord. It is also a time to prayerfully give the children back to God, acknowledging that His ability to oversee them is much more encompassing than the limited resources of the parents. However, giving children back to God does not end at the dedication service. Frequently, throughout the lives of her children, a mother finds herself on her knees, being reminded that she has given them to God and renewing that promise. Dedicating children to the Lord is releasing them into God's hands. It is allowing God full authority to intercept at any time the distractions, deception, and self-determination that leads children away from His will.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A mother has no way of knowing what path her children will take. If she prepares them for greatness, they have that advantage. If a mother believes in her children, and affirms them, the chances of success are greater. As mothers, we should underline everything we teach our children with godly, biblical principles. As we instill God's Word in our children, we give them a firm foundation that prepares them for greatness. Preparing our children to be sensitive to God's voice and obedient to His call is our first priority. As we teach our children using the Holy Bible as our instruction book, it not only equips them with moral standards and social skills but also teaches them to trust a true, living God for direction. Giving our children the tools found in God's Word truly prepares them for the greatness God has planned for them. ■

REFLECTIONS

- What type of crisis was common to both Moses and Jesus that threatened their lives as babies? Do you see a similar trend today?
- How do mothers who base their children's instructions on God's Word have an advantage over those who do not?
- Why is it important for a mother to have greatness in her, and what is that greatness based upon?
- Discuss how teaching children to have faith can make them fearless.
- Is there ever a time when a mother's influence is no longer effective in her children?
- For both Jochebed and Mary, it was hard to release their children into the hands of God. How can a mother find peace when she has to let go?