

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Jan. 18: God values greatly the lives of all people_11204

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God values greatly the lives of all people

Exodus 1:1-2:10; Proverbs 24:11-12

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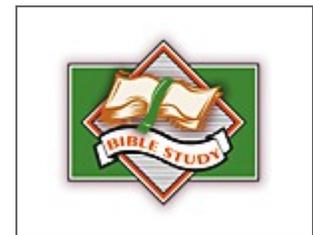
Lakeside Baptist Church, Granbury

The world spins out of control with violence. Think for a moment of how life is undervalued in the circle of life—an angry man commits murder, killing his wife; an innocent child dies at the hands of an incensed soldier under the command of tyrannical dictator's order; a child never breathes on her own as she suffers a quiet death inside her mother's womb; or a teenager commits suicide in the anxiety of self-rejection and in the rage of an internalized, uncontrolled anger.

Life casts a dark shadow when it is managed poorly and when the life itself is not valued as God values it. God yearns for abundant life to be

proclaimed. God longs for his deliverance to take action in a world of violence. God in his wisdom aims for the innocent to find help and protection in the swirl of violence. Who supplies such help?

Proverbs 24 can't be read without thinking of John 3:16. The realities of the world diminish God's light, but the joyous hope of God's love shines light in the darkness. God's love aims to deliver peace that stops the hand of violence.



Where do we see the tension and drama of God's love at work in a world of violence? The Christian fights for justice that defends the rights of those to whom injustice falls (Proverbs 24:11-12). Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The violent language of human hands is fearful when there is no justice." Where there is no voice for justice and no hand of justice, chaos and destruction rule furiously with violent voices and hands. The innocent experience abuse, fear and sin's angry extreme-death.

Exodus

Exodus records the power of God in valuing human life (Exodus 1:15-21). The children of Israel fought through the slavery and bondage of Egyptian rule. The children of Israel were doing three things in Egypt: (1) building marvelous cities for the pharaoh of Egypt; (2) encountering tremendous burdens that crushed the spirit of the children of Israel as well as pushed them to emotional, physical and spiritual exhaustion; (3) growing in their population as the Israelite families expanded (Exodus 1:10-12).

As the burdens, pressures and fears of the Israelite people weakened their

minds, souls and bodies, their faith in God strengthened. Amazingly, the Egyptians attempted to apply greater pressure and to “crush the Israelites to pieces” (Exodus 1:13-14), but their numbers still increased. Fearing the population growth of the Israelites might overtake the Egyptian population and desiring to crush the Israelites with oppression, the Egyptians ordered the male babies to be killed at birth (Exodus 15-16).

Faith in God, by its very nature, provides, protects and nurtures. God provides for his people, including providing for daily needs as well as supplying an escape route in times of temptation (Philippians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 10:13). He protects his people when they trust him in the pressures and oppressive circumstances of life (Genesis 22:14). He nurtures his people as he seeks to deepen their faith in him. He supplies faith for the journey and places people in the paths of life in order to meet needs and fulfill his plan. Rarely will God minister to a need without using people.

Midwives

God provided the midwives to protect his people (Exodus 1:17). The midwives faced a test of faith and conscience. Martin Luther says in such times where we struggle with conscience we must look to God and fix our gaze on Christ so that “during these struggles of conscience, we must learn to let go of ourselves.” For the Christian, faith produces a conscience that does the right thing in a crisis. Faith spurred the conscience of the midwives to deliver the male babies and to reject the command to kill. The Egyptians objected to the midwives' actions, but the midwives prevailed because, as they described, the babies were being delivered quickly (literally, “lively”). Why did the midwives prevail? Why did justice prevail? Why did the soft baby boys prevail?

The babies lived because of faith in God. The midwives trusted God's

purpose for their own lives. They possessed a ruthless trust that trusted God's judgment and in their consciences faith produced actions of justice fitting with the kingdom of God. They trusted God and lived out faith in the crisis of a fog, always following God's path in the expected hope of God's plan and protection.

Moses

In a similar vein, Exodus 2 reveals the story of Moses, how his mother and sister preserved his life by placing him in a basket on the Nile River. Moses was protected, delivered from the Nile River and provided a place for nurture and education in pharaoh's home. God valued Moses' life, just as he valued the lives of male babies in the days of Egyptian oppression.

God values human life. He values its soul, salvation, purpose and eternal destiny. That is why God sent Jesus. Jesus appealed to justice and pleaded on the behalf of the innocent and oppressed. He calls his people to value human life even as he does.

Question for discussion

- ◆ Does considering once again God's valuing of human life call any new avenues of ministry to mind?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.