

BaptistWay Bible Series for May 22: Women at Moses's birth: Taking action to help children

May 10, 2011

We recently celebrated Mother's Day in honor of all the women who have made a difference in our lives. If this comes as news to you, I recommend calling the flower shop quickly and sending the most expensive bouquet of flowers you can to your mom or wife.

Mother's Day is a special day in which we say thank you to those who do a job that typically gets unnoticed, until the job is not done well. Stories of moms who have mistreated their children or abandoned them haunt us when we hear them. Very rarely do we read stories about the vast majority of moms who sacrifice so much for their children and do all they can to raise them in a responsible way.

Personally, I cannot put into words how much my mom has done for me and how much my wife does for our children. Far too often, the people who make the biggest impact on us fall through the cracks of our attention and are overlooked. We need to do a better job of recognizing and thanking those people in our lives.

As we read through the book of Exodus, we will be filled with awe at the mighty acts God performs through his servant Moses. Moses became a hero for God and led the people out of Egypt. The Israelites never forgot the courage and leadership of Moses as he followed God's call and helped to organize the people of Israel into becoming God's chosen people. Moses is a true hero; but, do we overlook some heroes within this story?

The book of Exodus begins with a story of unimaginable cruelty. The leader

of the Egyptians, Pharaoh, was afraid of the power of the Israelites, should they have chosen to use it. He chose to force them into submission through slavery and when that was not enough he ordered their baby boys to be thrown into the Nile River.

This, of course, was an act the modern mind cannot comprehend. This is the time period when Moses was born, and sure enough, Moses was thrown into the Nile River; however, this was not an act of evil, but an act of heroism and courage.

Moses' mother, Jochebed, directly disobeyed the Pharaoh and carefully wrapped her baby boy safely into a papyrus basket and gave him the best chance of survival possible. Before you question how a mom could put her son into a river, let's try to understand the situation.

Jochebed had to have been hiding Moses for months before he even was born. If anyone suspected she was pregnant, she would have been watched by the Egyptians and forced to throw Moses into the Nile the moment he was born. Does this mean she had to hide this pregnancy from everyone for fear word may get out? I think she probably did. There was no excitement about this pregnancy, this was a fight for survival from the beginning; and the odds were stacked against Jochebed succeeding.

After keeping baby Moses hidden for three months, no other options were available to Jochebed. Heartbreakingly, she put Moses into a basket and placed him amidst the reeds of the Nile. How horrible to think that putting your child in a river at 3 months old gives the child the best chance of survival.

At this point, if we read too fast, we miss another quiet hero in the story, Miriam. Moses' sister positioned herself to follow the basket along the river. Moses' mom and sister set him afloat hoping and praying someone would find him and have mercy; but, who would have mercy on a baby

Pharaoh had condemned to die.

You must admit the irony of this story leaps off the page as we learn that Moses, the Hebrew baby boy condemned to death, is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. Just so you are clear, this is the same Pharaoh would order the genocide. His own daughter rescues the child who will grow up to bring devastation on the Egyptian people and free the Hebrew people from slavery.

Pharaoh's daughter did not know the whole story as we do, but she must have known her father was not a strong supporter of the Hebrew people. She was willing to do what was right even if doing the right thing meant bringing a Hebrew into the palace. She did the right thing in spite of the possible consequences.

Even though we have no indication that Pharaoh's daughter believed in the one true God, we can learn from her willingness to do what was right no matter the cost.

These women, Jochebed, Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter, should not be overlooked. Even though their names do not flood the pages of the Old Testament, their actions were used by God to bring about his purposes. These women simply did what they knew to be right.

They were not easy choices; in fact, each of them could have been killed for what they did. Making the right choice in the face of such impossible circumstances never is easy. I hope we will choose to do what is right just like these three heroic women.