



Central  
Peninsula  
Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

*One Tough Mother*

Exodus 2:1–10

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Mother's Day

When our oldest daughter Katie turned 14 her mother and I decided to throw her a surprise birthday party. We measured the size of our basement and went to one of her friends and asked that she quietly ask 20-25 of her friends to come to Katie's party. So we arranged the food, got some movies, and waited for the night to arrive. It turned out it was one of those really cold nights in February in the upper Midwest. It was literally 18 degrees below zero that night. The kids started to arrive. Carload after carload came through our front door dropped their coats, scarves, gloves and shoes and headed down to the basement. The kids kept coming—20, 25, 30, 35, 45, 50—I counted over 50 teenagers stuffed into our basement without their shoes and some deodorant-challenged! I remember moisture from condensation forming on the windows and frosting over on the inside.

We called for backup and one of my pastoral staff came over for zone coverage to make sure no shenanigans were going on in dark corners of our house. Things were going pretty well until Julie and I learned that an R-rated horror movie had been smuggled in and someone put it on the TV downstairs. I had rented *Miracle* and *Princess Diaries*. You see how out of touch this dad was! Well, there was no way we were going to have an R-rated horror flick being shown in our house. But it would mean going down into the basement in front of 50 kids and pulling the movie and potentially horrifying my daughter who was really an introvert and likely uncomfortable already with so many kids in her space.

So it was time to be brave... time to be a brave father. We had a hard choice to make. It was time to act. So what did I do? As the spiritual leader of my family, as the spiritual leader of our household, I asked Julie to go down and pull the movie! So Julie, quietly whispering a prayer no doubt, "God make me brave," went downstairs and pulled the movie. I hope every one of those kids went home and told their parents what my brave wife did that night. And you know what? Everyone stayed. Everyone had fun and no one got in trouble.

Julie is one tough mother.

We are going to talk today about a Hebrew mother who had to make brave choices for the welfare of her son. Her name is Jochebed. Probably some of us here today haven't heard of Jochebed. There is very little written about her. But you quite likely have heard of her son. She actually had two sons and a daughter. She also had a husband named Amram. Jochebed and Amram were descendants of Levi, born to carry out the

sacred priestly duties on behalf of the other 11 tribes of Israel. *"The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, a descendant of Levi, who was born to the Levites in Egypt. To Amram she bore Aaron, Moses and their sister Miriam"* (Num. 26:59).

It's probably good at this time to review a little Hebrew history leading up to this point. You might remember that for 400 years the Hebrews lived in the land of Egypt. They had a good life there and were favored by the Egyptians. They were favored because their ancestor Joseph had saved the Egyptian empire when a terrible famine had struck. Joseph was able to foresee the coming famine and helped the Egyptians store up food in the good years so that when the famine came, Egypt had more than enough food. Their food was so abundant that they were able to sell the surplus to desperately hungry people who came to Egypt to buy food. Egypt grew richer and more powerful. And Pharaoh gave Joseph permission to bring his father Jacob his brothers and all their families to Egypt and they lived well.

But as time went by, the Egyptians forgot about Joseph and how he had saved their nation from starvation. Over the next 400 years with Joseph and his brothers long gone, the Hebrew people were prospering and being fruitful and multiplying in Egypt. And the Egyptians began to see the Hebrews as a threat. They were openly discussing among themselves, "What will happen when the Hebrews outnumber us? What if they turn against us? What if one of our enemies makes an alliance with them?"

They became so threatened that the Egyptian Pharaoh forced all the Hebrews into slavery. Life was no longer good for them. By the sweat of their brow, they built cities like Pithom and Ramses. But it seemed that the more they were oppressed the more they grew in numbers.

The scripture records that Pharaoh did a very evil thing. He instituted infanticide by commanding the Hebrew midwives who helped the Hebrew women give birth to watch and if the baby born was a boy, they were to kill the boy, but they could let the baby girls live. These Hebrew midwives were tough and brave. Pharaoh was no match for them because they feared God more than they feared Pharaoh and they disobeyed Pharaoh's command. These midwives went against the immoral culture of selective birth, which means selective death and abortion. When Pharaoh didn't get the help from these brave midwives, he did this:

**Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live" (Ex. 1:22).**

Pharaoh proclaimed that every Egyptian had a patriotic duty that when they came across a baby Hebrew boy, they were to throw him into the Nile to drown. It was during this reign of terror that Jochebed became pregnant with her third child. She didn't have to worry about her oldest son Aaron, but the baby boy in her womb would need one tough mother to survive. You have to believe that her prayer at this time was "Lord, make me brave."

### **A Tough Mother has Courageous Faith**

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months (Ex. 2:1-2).

Can you imagine what it must have taken to hide a child for three months? I remember one of our girls as an infant had a case of colic. I think our entire block heard my moans from a lack of sleep, not to mention her cries. Can you imagine living with such fear that you needed to hide your baby? Consider some places mothers live in our world today. What must it be like for a mother in China whose recent pregnancy might violate a national family size policy? Or mothers in places in this world who face real prospects of their children being taken from their arms to be trafficked, or taken from their arms to be trained for terrorism?

But if we really think about it, aren't we are called to hide our children every day from a culture of violence and promiscuity that bombards us? Our purpose as moms and dads are to be courageous and walk into a stinking basement full of teens watching an inappropriate movie and pull the plug, even when a cynical everyone-is-doing-it culture has determined that we are prudish, out of touch, too strict.

I remember later that evening at the birthday party one of Katie's friends came upstairs and said to me, "Mr. Reid, I think it was great that Katie's mom pulled the movie. I've seen that movie before. It's not good for those kids down there. I didn't know what to say so something came out like, "Well thank you Jenny, I'm glad you approved of what we did."

What gives a mother the courage to act in such a way? It's because courageous mothers fear God more than they fear man. Courageous mothers want to please God more than they want to please their unbelieving friends, or even their unbelieving husbands, or even the opinions of their own children. Dynamic faith requires us to do courageous things. Dynamic faith requires us to not violate our God-given consciences.

I found my view of my mom and her courage in parenting evolved over the years. This resonated with me.

4 years of age – My mommy can do anything.

8 years of age – My mom knows a lot! A whole lot!

12 years of age – My mother doesn't really know quite everything.

14 years of age – Mom... duh!

16 years of age – My mom? She's like, so "not cool."

18 years of age – That old woman? She's way out of touch!

25 years of age – Well, she might know a little bit about it.

35 years of age – Before we decide, let's get mom's opinion.

45 years of age – Wonder what mom thinks about it?

54 years of age – Wish I could talk it over with mom.

A tough mother not only has a courageous faith, she has practical faith.

### **A Tough Mother has Practical Faith**

But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him (verses 3-4).

It's interesting the word used for basket is the same word used for ark. The ark has the meaning of salvation for those in the ark and future judgment for those outside the ark. The tar was the texture of paste and the pitch was a liquid that came from the tar that sealed the cracks to make the basket watertight. So at three months Moses was exposed to the elements. Jochebed didn't send him floating down the Nile, she placed him among the reeds along the bank, a place where Egyptian women were known to congregate and bathe.

Moms, can you imagine what it would be like to give away your three-month-old not knowing what would happen to him or her? The baby you birthed, held, nursed, rocked, stayed up all night with, and then to give him up? I'm sure that most everyone here has some experience of giving up something precious. As far as our children, some of us here have lost children through divorce, some of us are estranged from our children due to choices they or we make, some of us here are struggling today because your child has preceded you in death. Some of us have given up the precious idea of having a child because you are unable to. Mother's Day is a hard day for some of us here. And there is even a certain amount of pain, a loneliness ache, when they leave home for college, when they get married, when they start their own life. Someone said, "Mothers begin saying good-bye to their children from the moment they are born."

With life comes the pain of loss, of needing to letting go. And with that comes with the opportunity to learn the art of releasing when we have no control. I think we can all relate to Jochebed's faith because this mother is asking God a question all of us at one time or another will ask, "God, what do we do when we can't do anything more?" Imagine her emotions that came with letting her baby go. She didn't just let him go. She let him go and trusted God.

What is the definition of faith? Hebrews 11:1 says, "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" Hebrews 11:23 says, "*By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*" That wording for "no ordinary child" means fine, good, beautiful. It's

the same word in Hebrew used to describe the different parts of creation in Genesis—the light, land, sea, sun, moon, stars, animals, man. God looked at all he had created and said it was good. So I think it is fair to say that Jochebed and Amram saw something special in their son. And they showed faith by trusting in something they couldn't see, a promise that God might use their son for something very special.

**Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said (verses 5-6).**

The wording for "felt sorry" is stronger in the original language. It means to have compassion, take pity, to spare him from the fate of other Hebrew baby boys. We don't know the name of Pharaoh's daughter. But we do know that the Pharaoh, her father, was Rameses II and he had over 60 daughters. That's a lot of Father's Day cards to read!

**Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother (verses 7-8).**

Can you see God in this story? Does this look like chance or coincidence to you?

- Jochebed just happened to put Moses in the right spot on the Nile.
- Pharaoh's daughter just happened to see the basket.
- Moses just happened to cry out.
- Miriam just happened to be near by.
- Jochebed just happened to be available to nurse.
- Pharaoh's daughter just happened to have enough influence to save the baby Moses.
- Pharaoh's instrument of death for Hebrew boys, the Nile River, becomes the instrument by which Moses and eventually an entire nation is saved.

**Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses saying, "I drew him out of the water" (verses 9-10).**

Moses literally means drawn out. How ironic, she drew him out of the water and God would use Moses to draw the Hebrews out of Egypt. Acts 7:22 says, *"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."*

What was Pharaoh's daughter able to give Moses? Growing up Egyptian Moses learned law, mathematics, and hieroglyphics, even the art of war. She gave him the best schools, best teachers, best training to be a success. And one day Jochebed's boy will

lead 2,000,000 people through the desert putting all these disciplines to work.

What was Pharaoh's daughter unable to give Moses? What kind of knowledge was missing from his education? It was knowledge of God. Tough mothers know that even with all the advanced education our society can supply, without God at the center of their child's life there will be an emptiness that nothing else can fill.

What did Jochebed give Moses? She couldn't read him the Bible like mothers today can. None of that has been written yet. Her son hadn't written the first five books of the Bible yet. She likely told him the stories of their ancestors, great men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. But I think she did more than that. I think she shared her life. She shared her courageous and practical faith. It was visible. She told him what she believed, and she showed him what she believed.

She wanted her baby to know God so that when times were tough he would never doubt. So when he was being drawn into the Egyptian pagan worship, he would sense the presence of God and not fall. She wanted her son to remember that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob loved him and had a plan for his life. That God would never leave him or forget him no matter what happened in his life.

Mothers here in this room today, understand this: Even when God seems silent to your obedience, remember to have faith and trust that God is always working for the good of his children. And it may totally be behind the scenes. Through those practical little things you do that seem so insignificant at the time, God says, "Be encouraged. Persevere! You may not see the results you want for a long time." For Jochebed it took 80 years before she saw God working fully in her son's life. And was she even still alive to see it?

So hang in there and stay tough because God rewards your faith. In Hebrews 11:23 not only did Jochebed get listed in the great faith chapter, so did her son. And we see the courageous and practical faith of Moses summarized in Hebrews 11:24-25. *"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin."*

### **A Tough Mother has Rewarded Faith**

Moms, let me give you a couple of verses as we close.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace has saved us. We are not saved because of our status or abilities or good works as a mother, father, son or daughter. Our salvation has nothing to do with our efforts or successes. We are simply saved by a gift of grace. God reached down to us to save us. We didn't, nor can we, climb up to salvation by our efforts. We can bring nothing of value to God except a heart that is changed by God. A willing

heart that God will transform and then turn around and release in the form of a courageous and practical faith. That is the recipe for making tough mothers.

***“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”*** (Eph. 2:8-10). Mothers, you have been re-created for your God-given purpose and we honor you this morning. We don’t idealize or romanticize the role God has given you. Your journey is one anyone who isn’t a mother will never understand. We will never comprehend all the challenges you face, the trials you endure, the joys you experience, the sorrows you feel, the day after day perseverance you need, or the heartache of releasing you must go through.

My mother’s been gone for nine years. I still miss her. I was reflecting this week on how to honor her. Proverbs 31 says, ***“Her children rise up and call her blessed.”*** Mother’s Day is an opportunity for us to rise up and call our mothers blessed. Understand that the Bible is full of less than perfect mothers. No mother is perfect, even mine. But I do know my mom was tough and brave and practical. She was a Proverbs 31 mom. She was in hospice for four days before she died. For the first two days her voice was weak, but we could still converse. We talked about her life. I told her how blessed I was by her and the experiences she gave me. The last two days of her life, she couldn’t talk, so I just talked. These things I talked about formed the eulogy I read at her memorial service.

*I am my mother’s son. I have never doubted God’s unconditional love for me because my mother showed God’s love to her son as clearly as any flawed human could.*

*My mother let her son experience wonderful things. She allowed her son to have a childhood filled with basketball, friends, laughter, music, travel, mountains and oceans, camping and golfing. My mother told her son how important it was to be well rounded. My mother could host a dinner party for 25, and the next day paint a seascape, sew her son a bathrobe, manage a stock portfolio, teach a bunch of unpublished insecure writers how to sell their stories. And the next day she could lay brick for a backyard patio.*

*Her son now understands why she exposed him to so many things in life. Her son never enjoyed model rockets, coin and stamp collecting, or woodworking. Her son now understands. By showing her son all these things he discovered what he wasn’t, and that helped him understand what he was. She was helping her son to understand who he was and why God made him the way he was, and what his purpose was to be.*

*My mother took her son to church. My mother was uncompromising when her son heard that he could fake being sick by heating the thermometer so he could skip out on church. My mother instilled in her son a strong sense of right and wrong. My mother rejoiced when her son eventually received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.*

*My mother taught her son to write. Imagine what it was like to have a professional writer edit her son’s college writing assignments. Imagine how much pleasure it gives her son today when he hears how his writings minister to a particular member of his congregation. When this happens her son offers up a little “thanks mom,” knowing that in some way this mom is joyful because she knows that her son gets it.*

*My mother taught her son to relate to people of all shapes, styles, and temperaments. Why? Why did she need to teach compassion to her son? I don’t know when my mother knew her son would be a pastor, but everything she said and did for him made the path clear to her son.*

*Twelve years before her death, her son was having some problems. His marriage was rocky. He spent many hours on the phone to his mother. She didn’t coddle her son. She spoke truth. She brought light to the darkness. She prayed prayers late into the night. Today her son loves his wife more than ever.*

*I am my mother’s only son. Her son has no regrets. Her son can think of nothing that he would have wanted his mother to do differently in raising him. Her son is blessed to look back and see why his mother sacrificed the way she did. Her son is blessed to look forward and see a blessed hope of a future, when her son will be able to see his mother again, hold his mother again, and tell her he loves her again. Her son gets it now. Her son is a man. But he is still his mother’s son.*

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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