

UNEDITED DRAFT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Mother's Day! Who would make your list of mothers that you respect, and whose example is worthy to follow? "Working Mother" magazine made a list of "Top 10 Most Powerful Moms of 2013." Included in the list were Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez. To my surprise, missing from the list was Jochebed. What? The name isn't familiar? Jochebed was the mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. She put her child ahead of herself. She was bold and took great risk. She was a powerful mother. But what made her especially powerful was that in the way she related to her family, she reflected and modeled what God wants us to know about his relationship with us.

God has always intended that the love and relationships within family be a reflection of God's love and relationship with us. In other words, where there is a happy healthy family in which each member is fulfilling their God-given roles, we also get a glimpse and a picture of the way God relates to us.

We'll save this for another sermon, but where a husband is loving his wife as a servant-leader with Christ-like self-sacrificial love, putting her needs ahead of his own... we get a glimpse of Christ's love for his church. Where the wife lovingly yields to her husband as the church does to Christ considering her husbands will before her own, we have a picture of the church's relationship to Christ.

Likewise when parents are the kind of parents God wants, and when children obey their parents, we again get a picture of our relationship with God... or the church's relationship with God. And it is that in particular we want to explore further today as we look at the kind of mother that Moses had.

The story takes place before the Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites lived within the borders of Egypt and reproduced for 400 years into a quite large nation. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, but they continued to increase in number. And so the Egyptians made a law that all baby boys born to the Israelite women must be killed. Can you imagine being an Israelite woman. You and your husband find out you are pregnant. What should be a joyful occasion became a time of great dread. Imagine the tension as month seven rolls around, then month 8. Then 8 ½. Would it be a boy? When would the Egyptians come to kill the baby boy? Horrific.

This was the situation when Jochebed and her husband Amron found out they were going to have a baby. Exodus 2 says:

Exodus 2:1-10

2 Now a man of the house of Levi [from other Scripture we know his name was Amron] **married a Levite woman** [Jochebed], **2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.** [Actually, this was her third child. Aaron and Miriam were Moses' older siblings.] **When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.**

What we are going to see is a pattern from Jochebed. A pattern of giving. So already we see that she gave... she gave birth. Do you ever wonder why we say it like that? "To GIVE birth." When you "give" anything, you accept a loss for someone else's gain. When a woman

gives birth to a child, she truly is giving. Now of course, belongs to God and is a gift of God, but that life is given through the baby's mother. And to give birth is no small feat. Six times over I've seen what it takes to give birth. I appreciate my wife greatly for what it cost her in terms of pain and effort to give birth.

But this was just the beginning of Jochebed's giving.

Once Moses was born, she had to hide him. And this she did at *great personal risk* to herself and her family. A newborn cry is not usually very loud, and they sleep an awful lot. But how did they hide the infant when soldiers come by for inspections? Where do you put a baby so that if it does cry, it will be muffled and inaudible? I don't know, but this couldn't have been easy to Moses' mother. So what's the second thing she gave? *She gave protection to her son.* Time and again she rescued her helpless son from a situation that could have meant his death at any time. At great personal risk, she time and again *saved her son.*

As each month passed, baby Moses' lungs got stronger, his cries got louder, he slept less and less. What would they do? How many stressful conversations did Moses' parents have as they weighed their options? How can we preserve the life our son? Have a done enough? What else can I do? God had entrusted them with this child. What would God have them do?

3 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. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

I imagine there were some close calls in the first 3 months. Something had to be done.

Although the text doesn't say it directly, I think it is very likely that Jochebed carefully planned the launch of baby Moses. For three months she thought about this plan. She noticed when Pharaoh's daughter took baths. She studied the currents and the speed of the river. Maybe she floated some pieces of wood down stream to see where they would go.

Finally, she knew it was time to act. In a woven papyrus basket sealed with pitch to make it waterproof, she placed her baby inside and launched him down stream. She couldn't be seen nearby or all would know whose baby this was. Instead Moses' sister would watch and follow the basket... making sure nothing unforeseen would happen to ruin her mother's plan.

Again, Jochebed gave. She planned meticulously, then she acted boldly in faith to *give him a chance of life... to save him... to give him a blessed future.*

5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 6 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.

Jochebed knew that it's one thing to issue an edict for all babies to be killed. It's another thing for a woman to look at a 3 month old baby and turn it in to be killed. Pharaoh's daughter's heart went out to this beautiful little Hebrew baby. She decided to adopt him... to make him her own son.

7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

This was all preplanned, wasn't it? Moses sister just "happens" to wander out along the bank of the river at that moment and says, "That baby will need to be nursed. Ma'lady, could I be of service to you by finding a Hebrew woman who might help in this way?"

8 “Yes, go,” she answered. And the girl went and got the baby’s mother. 9 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.

So not only did Moses mother get three years with her son, but she even got *paid* for it! Through careful planning and care, not only would Moses survive, but she would continue to care for him for probably 3 more years. And he would grow up in Pharaoh’s household.

So after rescuing him, she still gave. *She GAVE him care* as long as she was able.

10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses [means “to draw out”], saying, “I drew him out of the water.”

And here was the most difficult thing Jochebed had to give. *She had to give Moses up.* Whatever personal sacrifice was need, Moses’ mother was ready to give it for the sake of her son whom she loved so much.

All of this was done by faith. Did you know Moses’ parents are mentioned in the “heroes of faith” chapter of the Bible, Hebrews 11? It says: (Heb 11:23) 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.

Now here’s the thing. As I mentioned earlier, God in family God intends to reflect something of his relationship with us. And we certainly see that in the actions of Jochebed. In her *giving* she was reflecting and demonstrating our God who is even more giving.

Let’s recall how she gave:

- 1) She gave birth. Life from life. Our God is ultimately the giver of all life. He is the reason we exist. With every mother that gives birth we remember and rejoice at our God the Creator of all life. We praise him as the one from whom all life comes and to whom all life belongs.
- 2) Jochebed gave protection. And this is a reflection of the protection that God continues to provide for us day by day. Luther said it this way: “I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all I own, and all I need for body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil.” And like Jochebed did this not because all that baby Moses was doing for her, but simply because she was good and merciful, God does these things for us because he is good and merciful and not because we earned or deserved it.
- 3) Jochebed gave salvation or rescue to her child. In figuring out a plan to permanently save his life, she saved him. In a much greater way, God has saved you and me. There was a real dilemma with our sins that had to be resolved. Our life was in danger. Eternal death was looming. So God, before the creation of the world, devised a beautiful, perfect rescue plan to save us from the consequences of our sin and rebellion.

In order to rescue us, it cost God dearly. God had to give something up in order to rescue us. It cost him his own son. Jesus literally put himself in harm’s way to keep you from harm’s way. He lived the exact life the heavenly Father required. Then he offered himself as a perfect, innocent sacrifice for every last one of your sins. The complete payment for all your sins was made! A perfect rescue! God did this to ensure you a guaranteed and blessed future with him forever in heaven. You are no longer in danger. Satan can no longer harm you or kill you spiritually. You are safe and secure in the arms of your loving God.

Mothers, you are for your children a reflection of God and his love. In your relationship with your children, you give them a picture of God's relationship with us. When you protect them, love them, nurture them, and do all you can for their future... you are both an arm of God for blessing them, and you are giving your children a little glimpse of what God does for us.

Maybe you've heard this before that being a mother is the highest calling, and a great responsibility, and the hardest job you ever did. And maybe you cast that aside and thought, "No, it's really not all that. It's tedious, thankless, monotonous, dirty, hard work." I pray that what we've talked about today will open your eyes. Everything you do for you children gives them a little glimpse at what God is like and how he desires to relate to us. What could be more important than that?!

If you are sitting there realizing that you haven't always been a very accurate reflection of God in the way you deal with your children, take those sins to God, confess them, and know this: the blood of Jesus Christ covers your failings as a mother. You are forgiven. The slate is wiped clean. You get to start over starting right now. What will it look like going forward to reflect God's relationship with you, in your relationship with your children? The planning and work and effort you pour into this is totally worth.

May God bless all mothers as they undertake what is literally one of the most important and most difficult jobs in the world: mothering. Happy mothers day! Amen.