

Exodus 2:1-10 Parents, Feed Your Children with God's Word October 28-30, 2017
Pastor Don Sutton – St. Paul's Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN

Devotion 1

Were you in church last weekend? If so, let's see what you recall. If not, see what you missed. Let's take a brief *True-False* quiz.

- **True or False** – Children are most likely to keep going to church when they become adults if Dad faithfully attends church with them in their youth?

- **True or False** – It's best to let a child decide whether they are going to be religious or not?

- **True or False** – Children are more likely to be active in church as adults if their parents talk about their faith at home.

- **True or False** – The majority of Christian families regularly have family Bible time together.

Last week Pastor Smith emphasized the importance of parents and especially fathers, taking a prominent role in the spiritual lives of their children. This week I'd like to focus on the importance of family Bible time and Jesus talk in the home. To do so let's start with an example from about 3,500 years ago where parents seized a unique opportunity to not only feed their son physical food, but spiritual food. Not only did it result in great blessing to the child and to the family, but to millions of Israelites later on.

Exodus 2:1-10

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman,² 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.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.⁵ 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.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.⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"⁸ "Yes, go," she answered. So 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.¹⁰ 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."

Over 400 years before this account, when Joseph was Prime Minister of Egypt and his family were living there, the Pharaoh or King of Egypt treated them as honored guests. But the dynasty of rulers changed with foreign rulers ruling for a while only to be overthrown by Egyptian dynasties no longer friendly to the Israelites.

The major reason was that the number of Israelites had increased so greatly that the Egyptians feared being outnumbered in the event of a war with Israel taking sides with Egypt's enemies.

To minimize this threat the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. They oppressed them with hard labor. But this didn't work. The Israelite numbers continued to increase. So the Egyptians told the Israelite mid-wives to kill boy babies when they were born. But in fear of God, the mid-wives wouldn't do that. Then the Pharaoh commanded his people to kill any Israelite boy babies of whom they would find.

Keep in mind that in the days of Joseph the Israelites settled in the delta region of the Nile River called Goshen. The foreign dynasty, the Hyksos, that ruled Egypt for over a century built royal cities up in this area along branches of the Nile River. One of them was in the area of Avaris or Zoan that lay along an arm of the Nile not infested with crocodiles.

It was in this setting that a Levite man named Amram, married a Levite woman named Jochebed. God blessed them with a son, Aaron, and a daughter, Miriam. Later God blessed them with another son, eventually named Moses. For three months Amram and Jochebed hid Moses. The Hebrew of Exodus says “because he was good.” In Acts 7 as Stephen the Martyr tells of Moses’ birth he literally said that Moses was pleasing or beautiful to God. Every child is. In Hebrews 11:23 God reveals, **“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.”**

So faith in God moved these parents to look at their child as a gift of God that they were to save and not to be afraid because God was with them. So they hid their baby son until they could no longer. Then it was love for and faith in God as well as love for their child that moved Mom to make and waterproof a little ark or basket made of papyrus, adhesives, and waterproofing products that she could easily find down by the river.

Jochebed put Moses into it and set the basket among the reeds with older sister, Miriam to keep watch. Remember, no crocodiles in this area. So it was a place that Pharaoh’s daughter like to bathe, which she did that day Jochebed put her precious little boy in the little ark in the backwaters of the Nile.

Do you see God at work in this account? Not only does he give Dad and Mom the will and courage to hide their son, he does all kinds of other things. Pharaoh’s daughter comes to bathe at the right time and right place. Rather than kill the child, she feels sorry for him and wants to keep him. It just so happens that Miriam is right there and offers to find a wet nurse to care for the baby for the next few years until he is weaned. Since Jochebed has dairy capability Miriam takes her brother home to her mother. So Amram and Jochebed get to spend the early years of life with Moses and Jochebed gets paid for it.

Isn’t it amazing how God in his love can work good in our lives even when things seem so bad? Trust God when he says, **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).”**

❖ HYMN - PARENTS, HEAR WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - CW 516

Devotion 2

When Moses was weaned at age three or so, as was the custom in those days, Jochebed returned him to Pharaoh’s daughter, trusting that Moses would be treated well. He was. He became the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and had access to the best education and lifestyle Egypt had to offer. There he would be trained to be a future leader in Egypt, something that God would use when Moses later became the leader of Israel.

But let’s go back to those first three years of his life. His with his Jewish parents. While it doesn’t say that they raised him in the word and way of the Lord, you can bet they did! In simple terms they probably told him about God and his creation, Noah and the Flood, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, about Joseph becoming a leader in Egypt, and how the Israelites ended up in Egypt. They told Moses about God’s promise to give them the land of Canaan. But most importantly they told Moses about the Savior to come in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed as God promised Abraham. God’s Spirit worked through these truths to touch Moses’ heart and bless his soul with an identity as a child of God saved through faith. Just as life in the royal household would equip Moses for his future, so would life in the home of Amram and Jochebed prepare Moses not only for time but also for eternity. They fed Moses’ body. They fed Moses’ soul.

This is what God wants from us parents – to not only physically and emotionally feed and care for our children, but also to do so spiritually.

I think for a lot of us parents those early years when our children are little, are golden opportunities to share God’s word with our children that we grab hold of. We may read a Bible story before nap or bed time and say a little prayer. I remember that from when I was a child. Little children love to hear about God and love to hear it from Dad and Mom. If you’re doing it, keep it up. If you’re not start up. Seize the opportunity to feed your children with the Word of God.

But once our children get to the age when they can go to Sunday School or pre-kindergarten, what happens? In some families Dad and Mom continue to do the family Bible time or reading a Bible story at bed time, maybe also singing, and praying.

However, it seems that in a lot of Christian families the “stop-and-drop” syndrome sets in. Parents pass their children off to Sunday and Wednesday School and Lutheran School teachers. In no way am I saying that these are bad. They are blessings. But they are not intended to replace parents and the sharing of God’s word at home.

When we don’t do this we are falling short on the responsibility God lays out in Deuteronomy 4 or Ephesians 6:4 where we are to bring up our children in the guidance and instruction of God’s word. We’re sinning. This is reason to repent.

A golden opportunity for parents to focus on God’s Word is when we help them with their home work from St. Paul’s school or confirmation class, or ask them what they learned in Sunday or Wednesday school, or what did they get out of worship – the sermon, the readings, the children’s devotion or the hymns.

But there are also blessings in families taking time to focus on God’s word together – family Bible time. It gives the Holy Spirit opportunity to work in the hearts of family members, it brings families closer to God, closer to one another, and models for children how to be teachers in the home when they have children.

These family Bible times give parents the opportunity to share Jesus being born, doing miracles, suffering, dying, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. It’s an opportunity to talk about God’s commands, sin, and God’s love in Jesus that moves him to forgive us as well as to live for God. It’s an opportunity to talk about God’s presence and role in our everyday lives.

But there are challenges in doing family Bible time. Time is one for many families. Another is when you have children from young to old. Sometimes parents feel inadequate doing this. There’s the question of where to start and what to do.

With smaller and young children nap time or before bed is perfect. Or when there are those times they want to snuggle. Keep it simple. Keep it short. Read a Bible story. Sing a song – Pandora can be your friend. Say a prayer. After supper may work but after sitting for a meal the window of opportunity may be short.

Supper may be the time to do a devotion with older children. Use a devotional book. Read a story from the Bible. Ask, “What is God saying to us, to you?”

When it comes to middle and high students, we found it difficult to get everyone together. But when it worked, we would have a little stack of paperback bibles by the table to take turns reading a section and then talking about what God was saying to us. Talk about what’s happening in their lives, at school, our country or world in view of God’s Word. Discuss what to pray for and then close with a prayer.

CPH Video

It’s a challenge. But it’s worth it. Remember Amram, Jochebed and their family and the effect it had on Moses.

Also remember God’s word through the Apostle Paul: **“I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”**

Parents, feed your children with God’s Word.