

## ***“Fear, Courage and Faith that Binds them Together”***

**Theme: Lessons from Moses, the Prince of Egypt**

Sermon Scripture: Exodus 1:8-11, 15-17 and 2:1-6

**Family Activity for the Week:** Research the women in Bible, particularly those connected with the story of Moses found in the book of Exodus. With younger children, use a Bible storybook and discover how many stories of women are told. With older kids, use a concordance or the Internet to explore the stories of women. You may also want to discover how many names of women are mentioned whose stories are not told. Read a few of the stories and describe the qualities of the women mentioned. Discuss what their stories teach us about God. Think of the women in your life today and compare Biblical women with them. Write a note to a woman who displays God-like qualities. Thank her for sharing her faith. As a family, commit to praying for the special women in your life.

**Monday, August 12** – Read Genesis 41:33-43, 46:31-34. We learned in the sermon series this last December, “Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph,” (<http://www.fumcdurango.org/series/christmas-through-the-eyes-of-joseph/>) that Joseph rose from slavery to become the second-in-command in Egypt. His wise management saved Egypt, and many nearby areas, from famine. He was able to feed his own family and moved them all to Egypt. That was not a stand-alone story—it formed a crucial background for the story of Moses and the Exodus.

- In some other Scriptural stories (e.g. Daniel 6), we see Israelites who were given high office by non-Israelite kings facing jealousy and resistance. Do you suppose that ambitious Egyptian officials were at first unhappy to see Joseph literally moved from prison to Pharaoh’s second-in-command? Based on what you know of Joseph’s character, how would you expect him to have dealt with any such people?
- Despite Joseph’s power, he drew on Egyptian prejudice against “shepherds” to ensure his family a chance to live in the fertile land of Goshen. It gave Israel a place in which to thrive. It may also have foreshadowed the hatred and oppression they would face decades in the future. The Egyptians thought all shepherds were “beneath their dignity.” Which people might you see in a similar way? What spiritual dangers does that attitude carry?

**Prayer:** *Jesus, guide me, like Joseph, to use whatever gifts and talents I have in ways that bless others. Give me a compassionate dignity like yours, not the kind the Egyptians had that looks down on others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 13** – Read Genesis 50:22-26. Egyptian history seems to indicate that, during Joseph’s life, the Hyksos, a Semitic people who were “cousins” to the Israelites, ruled the country. But despite the success and shelter Joseph and his family found in Egypt, Joseph was confident that someday Israel would leave to return to the land God promised to Abraham. He made his confidence concrete by specifying that, when that day came, Israel was to take his bones with them.

- As best we can tell, it’s unlikely that Joseph and his family had anything like our hope for God’s eternal heavenly kingdom. But Joseph made it clear that his vision reached far beyond the horizon of his own lifetime. In what ways do your vision and hope extend beyond your own lifetime? How do you share that with those who are important to you?
- The Israelites took Joseph’s dying command very seriously. Many decades after he died, they carried out his wishes (cf. Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32). In what ways do you, in your family or your church, honor and live out the wishes of those who have gone before you in the faith? Do you believe it’s possible to do that without getting “stuck in the past”?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, Joseph died in the confidence that you could and would work in ways that he had never personally seen. Let his faith and hope infuse my inner life, teaching me to trust you more deeply. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 14** – Read Exodus 1:6-14. Around 1550 BCE the Egyptians overthrew their Hyksos rulers and placed Egyptian kings on the throne. That’s probably reflected in the ominous phrase that a king came to power “who didn’t know Joseph.” Ruling one of the most powerful kingdoms on earth at that time, this king nevertheless reacted to the presence of these “foreign” people with fear, which quickly turned to hatred and oppression.

- This story shows us a human tendency seen repeatedly in history. We describe our drive for power and wealth with the word “security”—yet, many times, the more power and wealth we acquire, the more insecure we become. In what does your security reside? Is there any dimension of your security that, in truth, tends simply to make you feel less secure?
- Also, sadly familiar is the fact that the Pharaoh and many Egyptians feared the Israelites, in part, just because they were different. There’s no sign that any Israelite had acted against Egypt. When the Japanese

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for August 10-11, 2019 – For more, go to [www.fumcdurango.org](http://www.fumcdurango.org))

air force bombed Pearl Harbor, the United States swiftly began interning Japanese Americans in camps, even if they'd been here for generations, and without requiring any evidence that they were disloyal. How can you help your family, your church and your nation to resist unreasoned fear of those who are different in some way?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, in 1 John I read, "Perfect love drives out fear." In these days, when so much in the news can make me feel afraid, I ask You continue to plant your perfect love in my heart and mind. Amen.*

**Thursday, August 15** – Read Exodus 1:15-22. We read New Testament stories in which poor rabbis like the apostle Paul or Jesus himself faced powerful Roman rulers—and we realize the durable power was with the person who seemed weaker. Exodus did the same thing. Pharaoh was a title—Exodus didn't even name the fear-crazed, genocidal man who held it. But Shiprah and Puah, two powerless midwives, "respected God." In the end, their courage defeated the most powerful man in their world.

- Our world still tends to think in terms of "power." Too often "might makes right," it seems. Think of news stories you've heard in which some elected leader or celebrity, challenged for doing something wrong, responded with "Do you know who I am?" Can you imagine Pharaoh asking Shiprah and Puah that question? How can you, however powerful or lowly your status, avoid dealing with others from a "Do you know who I am?" stance?
- Honesty is a virtue the Bible praised (e.g. Proverbs 12:19). Yet, faced with this extreme situation, the midwives Shiprah and Puah told Pharaoh what we might describe as a "white lie," or at least an evasive answer. (They did not say, "Your order is wrong, and we refuse to obey it.") Are there times when one value (in this case, saving innocent lives) takes precedence over another value (telling the absolute truth)? If so, how can you avoid using that reasoning to excuse destructive behavior?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, give me the moral courage to do what's right. Keep me from abusing any great or small power I have in ways that hurt others. Give me discernment to sense the highest value in challenging situations. Amen.*

**Friday, August 16** - Read Exodus 2:1-10. Against the backdrop of oppression and hatred, Exodus recorded a close-up of one Hebrew woman's response. She had a "healthy and beautiful" baby boy. But babies are hard to keep secret. In desperation, she placed him in a basket, and placed it in an area of reeds where (it seems) she knew one of Pharaoh's daughters often bathed. The princess recognized the child as a Hebrew, but felt compassion and ignored her father's vicious orders. God cared for Moses and his birth mother—Pharaoh's daughter even paid his own mother to nurse him!

- Focus first on Moses' mother and sister. Even when trapped in dreadful circumstances not of their own making, how did they show initiative and ingenuity instead of throwing up their hands in despair? When they placed their precious baby among the reeds, do you believe they had any guarantee that the baby would be safe? Imagine the range of emotions Moses' mother must have felt when she received the job offer from the Egyptian princess!
- If you were "casting" this story, do you think you would have chosen Pharaoh's daughter as the most likely person to save Moses from the river? What qualities of character did she show when she spotted the strange basket floating among the reeds? Are you aware of other times in history when good character qualities thwarted tyrants who ordered people to set aside curiosity or compassion?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, when life gets hard (as, sooner or later, it always does), help me to have the determination to keep trying that Moses' mother showed. And keep my heart always open and compassionate, like Pharaoh's daughter. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 17** – Read Exodus 2:11-22. Exodus did not specify the age at which Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses—it just said it happened after he "had grown up." In this reading, he "had become an adult," strong enough to kill a cruel Egyptian slave driver. His compassion for another Hebrew was admirable. His action, on the other hand, drew negative reactions from other Hebrews as well as from the Egyptians. He fled to Midian, which lay outside Egyptian territory, east of what we today call the Gulf of Aqaba. He showed his compassion again in protecting the women shepherds, and as a result found a home and a family.

- What do you believe motivated Moses to kill the Egyptian? What did the story of Moses' care for Reuel's daughters reveal about Moses? What positive sides of his character did both stories highlight? What made his choices in the story about Reuel's daughters wiser and more productive than his killing of the Egyptian slave master? When have you seen an unjust act or situation that made you angry? What, if anything, did you do about it? What can this part of Moses' story teach you about how to deal with those situations?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, as a popular Christian song, "Break my heart for what breaks yours." Grow in me a keen sensitivity to evil and injustice, and an equally keen sense of what I can do about it that will help. Amen.*