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Fellowship
Life of Moses
Lesson 2
Undaunted Courage
Ex 1:15-22
11/17/02
(Updated 8.10.14)

Introduction...Ever had a moment that seemed to require extraordinary courage...to do what you absolutely feared to do...perhaps it was even something that later, after you had faced it, it seemed rather benign, such as something to do with the dark or riding a scary ride? Ever felt your heart beating so fast that you thought you thought it might explode? Fear, anxiety, fight or flight response can really be a scary experience?

So in the story we are about to explore, would you have courage to obey God rather than the king? Even to lie to cover up a greater truth? Even at the risk of your own life? Ever faced anything even remotely close to standing up for something that could cost you your life? Talk about the fear....Thank God, these courageous women choose to revere God over the king...

Pray
Read the Passage three times...
Ask questions...

1:15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives,
whose names were Shiphrah and Puah,

Just two midwives for the entire nation? What do midwives do? Do they help deliver the baby? How? Tell the father to calm down? Check the umbilical cord to see if it wrapped around the baby's neck? Why do we have doctors today? Why do some still use midwives? Why do they call them midwives? Does mid- mean part way here? How many babies did they deliver a day? A week? A year? How did they get into this service? Did they learn it from their mothers? Did they do it together or on their own? Were they paid?

How great a palace were they called into at this time? Were they in awe? Did they know what was up? Were they afraid?

"When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth
and observe them on the delivery stool,
if it is a boy, kill him;
but if it is a girl, let her live."

This must have been a shock to them. How did they feel about this? Did they respond at all? Or were they just quiet in receiving their command? I am sure had they said anything they would have been put to death. Why does he want boys put to death and not girls? Boys could do work? Women are the ones who would have children. Would the men have just sought out Egyptians wives after a time? What was going on here?

17 The midwives, however, feared God
and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do;
they let the boys live.

This took great courage; obviously it was based on their reverence for God. Now what is interesting here is that 300 plus years have passed since Joseph, his father Jacob and his eleven brothers lived. Yet we still see a monotheistic faith in God. How many or how strongly had all of Jacob's descendents chosen to worship God? And how were they doing this? There was no Mosaic Law at this time? This happens in about 80 years, after Moses turns eighty. How did they know what was right and wrong? How had Job known? Or Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Joseph? How did people worship God before the Law and the tabernacle?

I imagine there were a lot of thankful parents for what these midwives were doing.

18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them,
"Why have you done this?
Why have you let the boys live?"

Ought oh! Were they afraid? Was the king furious?

19 The midwives answered Pharaoh,
"Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women;
they are vigorous
and give birth before the midwives arrive."

What does vigorous mean? Strong? Push their kids quicker and harder? Was this true? Or had this happened on occasion and so they knew it was a good way to get around the king? Did they fear their lives? Why did the king just want it done when the baby was being born? Would they have been able to murder the babies without the parents knowledge? But eventually wouldn't have someone figured out that only girls were being born? Was the king asking the midwives to murder the baby boys and lie to their parents? Interesting thought. Similar to what the "Pro-choice" movement does today. It is only years later when women realize what they have really done—taken a life—does the horror of their choice become evident.

20 So God was kind to the midwives
and the people increased
and became even more numerous.

How was God kind to the midwives? How did Moses the writer of this book know? Was it because they had children too? So the king's attempt to control the population backfired on him. It is not working. How many years did this go on?

21 And because the midwives feared God,
he gave them families of their own.

Was this one of the reasons they helped others have children—they did not have families of their own? God honored their obedience.

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

Who were Pharaoh's people? Egyptians? Who did this awful deed? Was this to the Hebrews? Did they comply if it was said to them? What if they didn't—would they die? What an awful choice to have to make. Why the river Nile? Why drowning? How far did they live from the Nile? How many baby boys were actually killed? What affect did this have on this have on the Hebrew people? This must have been devastating? A horrible tragedy!

Whos? king of Egypt, Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, Hebrew women, boy, girl, God, Egyptian women, the people, families of their own, every boy, every girl

Wheres? On the delivery stool, into the Nile

Whens? When you help the Hebrew women, then the king summoned, before the midwives arrive, then Pharaoh gave this order

Whats?

- Pharaoh orders the Hebrew midwives to kill the baby boys as they are being delivered; let the girls live.
- But because of their fear in God, the Hebrew midwives do not obey the king's orders and allow the boys to live.
- The king summons the midwives back in and questions them as to why they are allowing the boys to live?

- The midwives answer by saying that the children are already born by the time they get there.
- God prospers both the midwives and the nation: the nation grows in people and the midwives are given families of their own.
- Pharaoh ups the ante when commands that all baby boys are to be thrown into the Nile.

Summary: In an attempt to put a chokehold on the growing Hebrew populace, Pharaoh resorts to infanticide.

Whys? What do I learn about God? Life? People? Myself?

- People can be really evil and cruel, especially rulers.
- It is interesting to note that despite four hundred years since Joseph's passing, there are those that still believe in Joseph's God...i.e. the Hebrew midwives were courageously obedient and protective of the male Hebrew infant born because of their fear of God. Apparently, they believed God existed and revered him. This in turn affected their actions. God had promised Abraham a nation. By killing the Hebrew baby boys born, in turn, they would have been going against that promise. Remember, the official Law, did not exist yet. Mt. Sinai is still on the horizon.
- In this case, to save life, as the rabbis would later teach, their lying was justified. It was accomplishing a greater good.
- In turn, God honored courageous obedience.
- And yet, evil does not give up without a fight.

So What's? Prayerfully connect a specific personal struggle to one of the above truths or principles and be willing to share it with the group.)

My struggles (2002): I have a lot to do today: several hours of premarital counseling this morning, check on a few people, make a few pastoral visits, find out the estimate on Jordan's car and when it can get fixed; try to pick up some rocks and plant some more grass around the church; start getting ready for my talk with the youth on dating Wednesday and a few other things that are on my mind.

Principles: 1) The Hebrew midwives were obedient because they feared God; 2) Because they were courageously obedient and defied Pharaoh's unconscionable command, God honors them; 3) and yet, Evil does not give up without a fight.

Prayerful application: My hope and prayer is that no matter what comes up today or this week, I want to be courageously obedient because I fear or revere God. The watch word of the day is “courageous obedience” or more simply put, “courage.”

“Well is there anything you are particularly facing Joe, that might require courage?”

“Oh a thousand things it seems like.”

“Well pick one.”

“One, huh?”

“Yeah, one.”

“Well, as much as I hate to admit it, to pick up some stupid rocks out front.”

“Ouch, that is a tough one. Why is that so tough?”

“Because there are so many. And I have nothing really to haul them off in because I loaned Jordan my truck to get back to school.”

(**Note:** In 2002, Jordan was in his freshman year at community college, had just had wreck on Halloween and the church had just been completed that summer. Apparently, we were still working on the grounds.)

“Well, remember, God honors courage.”

“Great, just what I wanted to hear.”

“Well, let us know how it turns out, Mr. Midwife.”

“Thanks (sarcastically). I will.”

2014 Application...

Thanks...Good Sunday, as we said good-bye to our CRU students and as we attempted to make the comparison of local Bass Pro and Big Cedar billionaire Johnny Morrison’s use of rocks out at his acclaimed Top of the Rock Wilderness resort to the true King’s use of living rocks or stones...us... that are not only attracted to the stone the builders rejected, but has become the corner stone, that is Christ himself, but, through his Spirit, he is transforming these stones into a dynasty of royal priests offering Spiritually acceptable sacrifices that in the end declare the virtues of God himself (1 Peter 2:4ff). Pretty special...huh? More special than even

billionaire Johnny Morris' rocks that attempt, in a way, to declare Johnny's virtues as a dreamer, builder, designer, etc. I think over the last two weeks, we anchored this truth in their lives...hopefully for a lifetime.

In addition, it has just been a good overall week, especially catching up on some pastoral counseling, visits and ministry. I am very blessed, including, after eight years of gradual searching, and two and half years of having only one vehicle and no truck, Rhonda and I have found and are purchasing a used 2003 four-wheel drive, five-speed, six cylinder Toyota Tacoma pickup with camper shell and only 112,000 miles. After passing a mechanical inspection yesterday, we go to pick it up on Sunday in Washington, MO. Thank you, God, for your grace in this journey. Bring us home safe.

Truth...Courageous obedience in the face of unrelenting evil.

Application...I am not sure I have ever had to face an unrelenting evil of the magnitude that the Hebrew midwives faced, but at times, it probably has felt like this. Perhaps those occasions were training for later moments or even moments to come in the future. Certainly, contemporary culture's rapidly changing anti-God, anti-Christ or anti-Bible attitude appears to have its in-the-future unavoidable implications. For the most part now, courage seems to be of a more midler variety, such as being willing to share my difficult truth, including painfully challenging, or willing to risk the rejection of those I dearly love. But it would seem true love...sustainable love, genuine love, Christ-like love... demands it. Or the courage of knitting together into an engaging and thoughtful presentation all the many tools or threads of SLove. Perhaps not the pious and shrewd courage of the midwives, but courage no less. And, if the most severest of times does come upon us, hopefully, all these smaller lessons in courage will lead to moments of extraordinary Spiritual courage.

Your struggle?

Principle?

Prayerful application?

What about your students? What are some of their current struggles?

Which principles seem to relate?

How could God prayerfully apply these truths to their lives? (Just try a few in your preparation...then try leading the application in that direction. It may go another direction. Be sensitive to God's leading among the group.)

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