

A Mother's Courage in the Hands of God

Exodus 2:1-10

Teacher's Guide

Introduction: Courage in the Face of Real Fear

In 2014, during the height of the Syrian civil war, a BBC journalist interviewed a young mother who had carried her newborn daughter across a landscape filled with danger. She walked through neighborhoods flattened by shelling. She hid in abandoned buildings when the sound of gunfire grew too close. She crossed borders crowded with refugees and climbed through mountain passes that were nearly impassable. She had no certainty about where she would sleep. She had no guarantee of food or safety. Yet she pressed forward, holding her daughter close. When asked how she found the strength to keep going, she said, "Fear did not disappear. My love for her was simply stronger than my fear."

Her words describe something familiar to many mothers. A mother's love often pushes her into places of courage she never expected. It gives her resolve when circumstances feel overwhelming. It steadies her heart when everything around her trembles. Sometimes her courage is loud and bold. More often it is quiet, steady, and uncelebrated. But in every case, it is love that leads her forward.

Exodus 2 opens with mothers living in a world shaped by fear. Pharaoh has declared that every Hebrew baby boy must die. The Nile becomes a place of death for an entire generation. Every pregnancy carries a mixture of joy and terror. Every mother wonders if her child will survive. Yet in the middle of this brutal decree, one woman chooses faith over fear. Jochebed hides her infant son as long as she can. When hiding him becomes impossible, she places him in a basket she crafted with her own hands and sets him among the reeds of the river where only the Lord can protect him. Her action is not despair. It is courage grounded in faith. She entrusts her child to the God who gave him.

God takes Jochebed's courage and begins to move through the lives of two other women who stand alongside her in this story. The first is Miriam, Jochebed's young daughter, who quietly positions herself at a distance to watch over her baby brother. Her role is small in appearance, yet her alertness and quick thinking open the door for Moses to be safely

returned to his own family. The second is Pharaoh's daughter, an Egyptian princess raised inside the palace of the very king who ordered the death of every Hebrew boy. She comes to the Nile expecting nothing unusual, yet when she discovers the crying infant, compassion rises in her heart. Despite knowing the child is Hebrew, she chooses to spare him. That single act defies her father's decree and becomes a crucial turning point in the story.

These three women stand on opposite ends of the social world. One is a Hebrew slave mother. One is a young Hebrew girl watching from the riverbank. One is a royal Egyptian woman with power and privilege. Yet God uses all three together. Their courage, compassion, and quiet obedience weave into one story that preserves the life of the child who will one day stand before Pharaoh, lead Israel out of slavery, and write the foundational books of Scripture. Their combined faith becomes the first chapter in God's unfolding work of deliverance.

Exodus 2:1–10 teaches us that a mother's courage holds real power, but it holds even greater power when placed in God's hands. The God who sees, the God who directs, and the God who delivers works through the faith of women who stand in hard places. Their choices become part of His redemptive story. He honors their trust, He uses their courage, and He weaves their faithfulness into His sovereign plan.

Opening Question

Who is a woman whose faith or courage has shaped your life in a significant way?

Possible Answers:

- A mother or grandmother who prayed faithfully
- A teacher or mentor whose influence guided you
- A sister or friend who helped you through hardship
- A spiritual mother in the church who modeled Christlike faith

I. Godly courage acts in faith even when the world is filled with fear (vv. 1–4).

What's Going On Here?

1) Jochebed Acts with Courage Under Threat (vv. 1–2)

The story begins with a Levite couple giving birth to a son at a moment when Pharaoh has ordered the death of every Hebrew boy. These short verses carry enormous weight. Jochebed (cf. Exodus 6:20, Numbers 26:59) lives under a ruler who views her son as a threat and has the power to take him from her arms. Yet when she sees that he is a “fine child,” she hides him for three months. The phrase “fine child” does not refer to appearance. It echoes Genesis 1 language, meaning “good,” “pleasing,” or “valuable.” Jochebed sees the God-given worth of her child. She responds with courage, driven by faith rather than fear.

Throughout Scripture, mothers play key roles in moments of danger. Hannah's prayer brings Samuel into Israel's story. Ruth's loyalty preserves the line of David. Mary's obedience brings Christ into the world. God delights to work through women of quiet faith and fierce courage. Jochebed stands in this line. She protects her child because she trusts the God who gave him.

2) Jochebed Places Her Child in God's Hands (vv. 3–4)

When hiding Moses becomes impossible, Jochebed makes a basket, covers it with pitch, and places her son among the reeds of the Nile. This is not an act of abandonment. The word for “basket” is the same word used for Noah's “ark” in Genesis. Jochebed is making a small ark of salvation and entrusting her son to the God who once delivered Noah through rising waters. The river that symbolized death becomes the place where God begins deliverance.

Miriam, the child's older sister, stands at a distance, watching. Her role is intentional. Watchfulness is part of faith. Jochebed acts with courage, and Miriam supports with wisdom. Together, they reflect the pattern of godly families working in unity under the hand of God. Their choices set the stage for a miracle only God can perform.

Discussion Question

Why does the first act of Moses' life teach us so much about the role of godly courage in a fearful world?

Possible Answers:

- Fearful moments reveal what we trust
- Courage often looks simple but comes from deep faith
- God sees and honors the sacrifices women make

- Faith sometimes requires releasing control

II. Godly courage becomes an instrument in God's hands to protect His purposes (vv. 5–8).

What's Going On Here?

1) Pharaoh's Daughter Shows Compassion in a Hostile Culture (vv. 5–6)

Pharaoh's daughter comes to the river to bathe and sees the basket. She opens it, hears the baby cry, and her heart is moved. This is a turning point in the narrative. Pharaoh issued a decree of death, but his own daughter defies it out of compassion. The text says she recognizes he is a Hebrew child, yet she chooses to spare him. God uses an Egyptian princess, a woman raised in a palace of idolatry, to protect the one who will bring Egypt to its knees. Her compassion becomes an instrument of God's plan.

This moment shows that God often works through unexpected people. He is not limited to Israelite homes or believing families. He moves through the hearts of those who fear Him and those who have never known Him. Pharaoh uses the Nile as a weapon. God uses the Nile as a place of rescue. Pharaoh uses Egyptian power to crush Israel. God uses an Egyptian woman to save Israel's deliverer. Human rebellion cannot stop the compassion God stirs in human hearts.

2) Miriam's Boldness Becomes Part of God's Plan (vv. 7–8)

Miriam steps into the moment with courage far beyond her years. She approaches Pharaoh's daughter and offers to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. Her wisdom is remarkable. She does not panic. She does not hide. She sees an opportunity and uses her voice for the life of her brother. Her boldness becomes another thread in the tapestry God is weaving.

This is the first of several future moments when Miriam will lead with courage. She will later worship beside Moses after the Red Sea and join Moses and Aaron in guiding Israel. Her faithfulness begins here as a young girl standing beside the river. Scripture shows again and again that God uses the courage of women, young and old, to advance His redemptive purposes.

Discussion Question

How does God use the different strengths of Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter to show that He works through the faithfulness of many people to accomplish His plan?

Possible Answers:

- Each played a different role at the right moment
- God uses ordinary actions to shape extraordinary outcomes
- Different personalities and backgrounds can serve God's purpose
- Courage in one person creates opportunities for others to act

III. Godly courage is honored by a God who advances His plan through everyday faithfulness (vv. 9–10).

What's Going On Here?

1) God Returns Moses to His Mother's Arms (v. 9)

Pharaoh's daughter hires Moses' own mother to nurse him. The irony is powerful. The child whom Pharaoh wanted dead is now protected by the royal household. The mother who feared for her son's life is now paid to care for him. God turns danger into deliverance and fear into provision. Jochebed receives back the child she surrendered to the Lord. She is given time to shape him, teach him, and anchor him in the identity of God's people.

This is one of Scripture's clearest portraits of how God cares for mothers who entrust their children to Him. Jochebed released Moses with trembling faith, and God honored that courage. He placed Moses right back into her arms under divine protection. This reveals the heart of God toward every mother who releases a child into His care in seasons of fear, growth, or change. He is able to do more than they imagine.

2) God Positions Moses for the Calling He Will One Day Fulfill (v. 10)

After Moses is weaned, he is brought into Pharaoh's household, where he becomes the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. This sets the stage for Moses to receive an education, exposure, and position that no Hebrew family could have provided. God is preparing him to lead Israel, confront Pharaoh, and write the first books of Scripture. Jochebed cannot see all of this, but she has played her part with courage and trust. Her actions become the beginning of Israel's salvation.

This passage reminds believers that God is at work in ways far beyond what any parent can see. He shapes the future through the faithfulness of those who trust Him in the present. A mother's courage placed Moses on the path God designed. God honors those who walk by faith, and He faithfully carries forward His plan for future generations.

Discussion Question

How does God's care for Jochebed and Moses encourage modern mothers who feel uncertain about their children's future?

Possible Answers:

- God sees what they cannot see
- God can turn fear into provision
- God works through both small actions and great courage
- God holds the future even when parents cannot

Living Out God's Grace Today

A. Trust God when life feels overwhelming.

Jochebed lived under Pharaoh's deadly decree, yet she acted in faith rather than surrendering to fear. Scripture often places God's people in seasons where circumstances exceed their strength. Hannah waited through sorrow. Naomi endured loss. David fled from danger. Paul faced pressure that felt beyond his ability to endure. All of them moved forward by trusting God more than the weight of their situation.

In the same way, people today face pressures that stretch them emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Families carry burdens they never expected. Individuals face anxieties they did not choose. God invites His people to trust Him with what feels too heavy and lean on His strength when their own is not enough. Jochebed's example teaches every believer that God sees their faithful steps and sustains them in the middle of overwhelming circumstances.

B. Let courage grow from faith, not from fear.

Jochebed's courage did not flow from confidence in her own abilities. It grew from her confidence in the God who gave her Moses. The difference between fear-driven action and faith-driven courage is the difference between panic and trust. Joshua stepped forward because God promised His presence. Esther acted with wisdom because she believed

God had placed her where she stood. Peter found boldness only after trusting the risen Christ.

Believers today face decisions that require courage. Some involve family needs. Some involve work, relationships, ministry, or integrity. Scripture teaches that courage grows when our eyes are fixed on the Lord rather than the size of our circumstances. Jochebed acted with courage because she trusted the character of God. That same courage becomes available to every believer who anchors their confidence in Him.

C. Believe that God uses the faithfulness of ordinary people to shape future generations.

Exodus 2 highlights three different women: Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter. One was a Hebrew mother living under oppression. One was a young girl watching from the reeds. One was an Egyptian princess in a powerful home. God used all three. Their combined actions preserved the life of Moses, who became the leader of Israel and author of the Law. None of them knew the significance of their choices at the time. They simply acted faithfully in the moment God placed before them.

God continues to work this way. Ordinary believers shape the future through daily faithfulness. Parents influence their children. Teachers and mentors plant seeds of truth. Church members encourage one another and strengthen the body of Christ. The smallest obedient act can become part of a much larger work God intends to do in years ahead. Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter remind us that God is able to weave simple obedience into His redemptive plan.

D. Remember that God protects what you place in His hands.

Jochebed placed her child in a basket and entrusted him to God. The Lord guided that basket to the very person who would protect Moses and return him safely to his family. This pattern appears throughout Scripture. Hannah entrusted Samuel to the Lord, and Samuel became a faithful prophet. David entrusted his future to God while fleeing from Saul, and God established his throne. Paul entrusted his ministry to God and saw the gospel advance despite suffering.

Believers often face moments where they cannot secure an outcome. They can labor, pray, and plan, but there comes a point where they must entrust the situation to the Lord. Exodus 2 encourages every believer to place their needs, their concerns, and their future in God's hands. The Lord who guided Moses' basket still governs every detail of life with wisdom and care.

E. See your life as part of God's larger story, not just one moment in time.

Jochebed could not see the Red Sea part, the plagues fall, or Israel walk through the wilderness. She did not witness Moses receiving the Law or leading God's people toward the promised land. Yet her courage played a critical part in all of it. Her faith extended far beyond her lifetime. Her obedience became one of the first steps in Israel's salvation story.

Every believer's life is part of a story larger than what they can see. Faithfulness today may affect people we will never meet. Prayers, service, sacrifice, and obedience plant seeds that God may cause to bloom in later generations. This is true in families, churches, communities, and the kingdom of God. Exodus 2 reminds believers that God weaves their lives into His larger purpose, and their faithfulness matters far beyond the moment in which they live.

Conclusion: When a Mother's Courage Meets God's Power

Exodus 2 reminds us that God often begins His greatest works through the quiet, steady courage of women who trust Him in fearful times. Jochebed, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter each respond with faith, compassion, or initiative. Together, their choices preserve the deliverer of Israel. God moves the story of redemption forward not through Pharaoh's power, but through the faithfulness of women who believed that God could act.

Their courage rests in God's hands. Their actions become part of His salvation plan. And their faith shows us that God sees, God directs, and God protects His children through His servants.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for the women who have shaped our lives through faith, courage, and love. Strengthen every mother, grandmother, and spiritual mother in our church. Give them courage for the challenges they face, wisdom for the decisions before them, and confidence in Your power. Help us trust You with our children and with our future. Use our faith, like Jochebed's, in ways that honor You and bless generations to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.