

PREPARING AT HOME

August 21-27, 2017

Focus reading: Exodus 1:8—2:10 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=367477142>).

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 124; Romans 12:1–8; Matthew 16:13–20

Theme: Defiance

If you were a child when you first heard the story of Moses' birth, you may remember it as a story of a sweet baby floating happily along the river's edge in a cozy basket. If, however, we allow ourselves to hear the story anew, we find that it is a story about oppression, slavery, ethnic cleansing, civil disobedience, risk, faith, and the courageous actions of women. Egypt is under new leadership, a leader who has no connection with Joseph. This new Pharaoh feels threatened by the Hebrews, who are gaining in number; so, he tries to put them in their place through terrorism and genocide. He forces them into slavery and kills their infant sons. In the midst of this horrific violence, we see two brave midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, defying Pharaoh in order to save a newborn boy. We see a mother who in faith gives her son up twice in order to save him. We see a sister risk everything to watch over her brother. We see a daughter take a stand against her powerful father. The Bible isn't known as a book about powerful women, but here we see plenty of them from different ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds. At great personal risk, they each take action. Each one does whatever she can do, given her station in life. Their defiance does not come from a selfish desire for power but rather from compassion and a desire for justice. As a result, Moses lives and God's promise of salvation lives as well. The Hebrew people will be liberated and a nation will become the people of God.

STRONG WOMEN

There are many strong women in this story. Put yourself in the place of each woman. What do you suppose they were thinking and feeling? What was the risk each one took? What was difficult about what she did? Why would she do it anyway? What might have helped her to do the right thing, even though it was hard?

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

Are there Pharaohs in today's world, that is people who are terribly mean to innocent people? Who are they? Are there people like the women in the story? Who are they? Is there an action we can take in this situation? Share stories that are age appropriate for your children. Young children might talk about bullies, while older children and teens might talk about Malala's story (<https://www.malala.org/malalas-story>).

PRAYER

Liberating God,
We give thanks for strong women who fight for justice.
Help us to be strong and brave like
Shiphrah, Puah, and Malala,
that peace and justice might come to all people.
Amen.

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