

*Hero Of Faith Mothers*  
Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23  
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Mother's Day  
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Heroes. Every generation, each segment of society has heroes. Generally our heroes have been people we admire for their character, courage and achievements. We look up to them and see them as examples to follow. But things are changing. Many people now choose heroes without respect to character, courage or achievements. Many are drawn to flawed or messed up *heroes*. They say they can relate to them. Perhaps this reflects the confusion, the lack of widely accepted values and even despair in our world. Then there are *celebrity heroes*. Celebrities sometimes well known simply because... they are well known.

This morning I want us to think about a specific kind of hero—*mothers who are heroes of faith*. There are so many good mothers, but those in this group are in a class by themselves. They are not only valuable, but are also excellent examples for all of us.

We see something of what *Hero Of Faith Mothers* are like from Jochebed, a mother in Exodus chapter 2. You may think, “We already looked at this chapter a few weeks ago.” We did. Our focus then was on God working in the shadows caring for His people, unfolding His plan. Today we are zeroing in on Jochebed. She displayed at least four traits all *Hero Of Faith Mothers* have. Four traits all mothers, indeed all of us, should have.

The first is having a living faith in God. This is the essential foundation for being a *Hero Of Faith Mother*. Exodus chapter 2 does not mention her faith, but Hebrews 11:23 clearly tells us she had true, living faith in God.

“*By faith* Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.”

Jochebed and her husband are two of the heroes of faith listed in this grand chapter.

We don’t have the details of her background and life of faith. But Hebrews 11 tells us she had real, personal faith in God, not just cultural religion. All the events in these ten verses in Exodus 2 and each of the following characteristics we see in her are built on the foundation of her faith. She, as Abraham and so many others before and after her, believed God and God credited that to her as righteousness (cf. Genesis 16:6; Romans 4:3). She did all of these things “by faith.” The motivation and means for her actions was her relationship to God, her faith in Him. Living under the Pharaoh’s order to kill all newborn Hebrew sons was a time of great personal crisis which revealed her true character, her character of faith.

This essential remains true for us today. But what does it mean to have a real living faith in God, to truly be a Christian? Some people think if you have been baptized, go to church (at least now and then), and do the best you can, you are a Christian.

Then in our society, increasingly we are told, “Believe what you want. It really doesn’t make much difference. But don’t be so arrogant as to think your view of truth, of God and faith in Him is right for everyone.” And so the idea, “There are many views, paths, conversations, all of which can lead to the same destination.”

Be clear on this: God in the Bible tells us He is the only true God, that there is only one true faith, not many. He tells us there is only one way to Him, not many ways. So what is the core, essential truth of the Christian faith? Listen to D.A. Carson’s summary:

“We insist that salvation is gained exclusively through personal faith in the finished cross-work of Jesus Christ, who is both God and man. His redeeming death, planned and brought about by his heavenly Father, expiates [atones for] our sin, vanquishes Satan, propitiates [satisfies] the Father, and inaugurates the promised kingdom. In the ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, God himself is supremely revealed, such that rejection of Jesus, or denials of what the Scriptures tell us about Jesus, constitute nothing less than rejection of God himself. In consequence of his triumphant cross-work, Christ has bequeathed the Holy Spirit, himself God, as the downpayment of the final inheritance that will come to Christ’s people when he himself returns. The saving and transforming power of the Spirit displayed in the lives of Christ’s people is the product of divine grace, grace alone—grace that is apprehended by faith alone. The knowledge of God that we enjoy becomes for us an impetus to missionary outreach characterized by urgency and compassion.”<sup>1</sup>

Now that is a comprehensive statement. One does not have to know and understand all these details to come to true faith in Christ, but this is the essential bedrock of true Christian faith.

The apostle Paul summarizes the process of coming to true faith in Romans chapter 9, verses 9 and 10. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Yes, there are many good mothers who are not Christians. But no mother can fully fill her God-intended role without true, saving, living faith in Him through Jesus Christ.

Secondly, hero of faith mothers have a sacrificial love for their families. Both Exodus 2:2 and Hebrews 11:23 say that Moses was a “beautiful child.” Scholars discuss and debate the exact meaning of the word used here, but the basic ideas in the term include being well-formed, acceptable, pleasing, or beautiful.

Yes, there is a deep natural love and bond that mothers have for their children. And yes, almost all mothers willingly sacrifice for their families because they love them. But there is more than that here. Jochebed’s love for baby Moses was the same love she herself received

from God. It was love that truly looked at the best for Moses, God's best for him. It was love knowing that his life was precious and more important than the order of the most powerful ruler on earth. It was love from God that led her to risk her own life. If the Egyptian officials discovered she was disobeying the Pharaoh's order by allowing Moses to live, she most likely would have been killed along with him. Life was cheap to the Egyptian rulers. As well, their plan was to eliminate any potential threat from the Hebrews through a campaign of genocide.

Hero of faith mothers have a sacrificial love for their families flowing from the love of God which He has poured out in their own hearts. Romans 5:5 tells us that the Holy Spirit has poured out the love of God within the heart of every believer, of every person who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ. What kind of love is God's love?

- John's gospel, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16).
- Romans 5 says that "while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly [i.e., for us]," and that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (6, 8).
- 1 John 4, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (10).
- In Ephesians 5 Paul wrote that Christ has loved us "and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (2).

God's love, Christ's love is a *sacrificial* love.

*Hero of faith mothers* are believers who not only receive God's perfect love, but let it flow through them to their families. Some time ago I came across an organization called God's Love We Deliver. This organization provides meals to seriously ill people. That name struck me as so basic, and yet so profound. It should be an accurate description of every Christian—God's Love We Deliver. Hero of Faith Mothers deliver God's love to their families as Jochebed did.

The third mark of a Hero of Faith Mother we see in Jochebed is courageous obedience to God. Obedience. First we need to know what God expects of us. Some things are basic and clear, at least in theory: Do not worship anything or anyone other than God; do not lie, steal, murder, commit adultery or covet.

Jochebed and her husband Amram knew God did not want them to participate in or condone the genocide of their own people, of God's people, of any people. The ten commandments were not yet given, but the sanctity of human life goes back to creation. We

see this in God's judgment on Cain for killing his brother Abel in Genesis 4. And again much later, when Noah and his family left the ark after the flood, God said "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jochebed knew these things, after all her little Baby Moses decades later was directed by God to write the accounts of Cain and Able, of Noah in the book of Genesis.

But knowing in itself is not enough to bring about obedience. We all know that. We know our own struggles and failures to obey God, to do what we know what is right. Jochebed knew God's commands, but she also knew the Pharaoh's command and the cost of disobeying him. She had true, living faith. She loved her family with God's love. *And* she courageously obeyed God in this no matter what the cost might have been.

Hero of faith mothers display courageous obedience to God. We know many things that God tells us to do and not to do. For example, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." And so we are to do, to obey what God tells us in the Bible. We see both our part and God's part working together in Philippians 2:12-13,

"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

God is constantly at work in us. We are to trust him and step out, step forward in obedience. Not doing this equals failure. You may have heard the story the late President Ronald Regan told of being sent to a shoemaker as a boy to have a new pair of shoes made. The shoemaker asked him if he wanted a square or rounded toe. Young Ron couldn't decide. The shoemaker told him to let him know in a few days ... but he didn't. When he finally went to get his new shoes he received an unforgettable lesson in following or obeying directions: one of his new shoes had a rounded toe, while the other one had a square toe.

Hit the rewind button for a moment: think about this last week. How courageous were you in obeying God's truths in the Bible that you have known for a long time, or the new insights you gained from reading the Scripture during the week? Were you courageous in the opportunities and challenges to stand up against pressure to conform or to compromise with what you know is not right? Were you courageous to obey the prompting of God and step out to speak and act for Him?

*Hero of Faith Mothers* have a living faith in God, a sacrificial love for their families, courageous obedience to God and ... a wise strategy for action. Jochebed. Her first step was to recognize she needed a strategy. She needed an overall game plan, major objectives and specific action steps on how *to get there from here*.

When Moses was born and she faced the crisis caused by the Pharaoh's decree to kill all the baby boys, she could have taken a fatalistic view—"If God wants to protect my baby, to stop the Egyptians from killing him, He will." She could have sat back, wished and worried; fussed, fumed and feared.

But she didn't do that.

- She had an overall game plan: save her son.
- She had a major objective: secure a safe place for him.
- She had a strategy.

It's tempting to say, "Jochebed must have been a very clever woman!" God doesn't pull back the curtains and reveal how this strategy came about. There is no reason to think she was more or less clever than others. What we know is she trusted God, and God gave her the wisdom she needed step by step.

Walk through the strategy again. Her goal was to save her baby. Her plan may well have begun with asking herself and God some questions such as "Where would little Moses be safe?" "What place could be better than Pharaoh's own household?"

She drew on what she knew—she knew the place of the river where this daughter of Pharaoh came regularly to bathe. So, "If she saw a beautiful baby boy, how could she resist?" She made the basket, customized, made river-worthy with outer layers of tar and pitch. She waited for the right moment, and then she placed baby Moses in his ark in the river. She stationed her daughter where she could watch and protect little Moses.

God in His grace, mercy and sovereign plan made all these things work out. And, then, there was the bonus of getting paid by Pharaoh's daughter to care for her own baby. Every time I read and think through this account, I am impressed with God's great care for the smallest as well as the largest details, His provision of wisdom and guidance to Jochebed.

Mothers. With the enormous tasks and responsibilities you have for your families, you too need wise strategies. Where to begin? As we have seen: faith—love—obedience, *and* wisdom. I'm sure Jochebed would have liked to have God drop a blueprint out of the sky for how to save Moses. God didn't do that. He gave her wisdom. He guided her. He provided for her.

That's exactly what He does today, what He has done and will continue to do for you. The direction and will of God has to do with the way of wisdom, not waiting for or discovering a detailed blueprint. Think again of words, familiar to many of us, from the first chapter of James.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” (5-8)

However bright or clever you may or may not be is not the issue. The key point here is following God’s way of wisdom.

At the same time there is a caution here: even as we ask God for His wisdom, receive and follow it, there is no guarantee that the end result will always be what we want it to be. Many mothers of faith in Jochebed’s day saw their little baby boys put to death. The final outcome ultimately is in God’s hands as He works out His plans and purposes for His glory. Many times we cannot understand the triumphs or the tragedies. But in all times we do know that God loves us, cares for us, is working through us and is moving things onward to His perfect purposes.

As we wrap this up, Mother’s, don’t be fooled into thinking that Jochebed was a spiritual superwoman or exception to the norm. She, like most of the *Hero Of Faith Mothers* down through history, was a woman like you, with her strengths and weaknesses, faith and, yes, fears. She had

- no more faith than you can have;
- her love for her family was not greater than yours has been, is and will be;
- she was no more courageous than you can be;
- she received no more grace or wisdom than what God has promised and will give to you.

And then, mothers, on behalf of all the rest of us, *thank you!* Thank you for your faith and faithfulness, your love and care, your obedience to and reliance on God. Words cannot express your value to us and our appreciation for you.

Mothers, and all of us, we have seen in Jochebed a tangible and valuable reminder of how important it is to know Christ as our Savior and as the Lord of every aspect and situation of life.

In these next quiet moments with God, thank Him for your mother, whether she is still with you today, or has finished her course here on earth. Then crown Christ as the King of your life, surrendering all you are and have to Him, confidently trusting Him to make you a *hero of faith*, not for your glory, but for His. You may have never done this. If not, do that

now, or talk with me today. If you have, affirm your commitment to Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, D.A. *The Gagging Of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, p. 445.

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