



1 The Birth of Moses

Scripture

Exodus 1:8-12, 22; 2:1-10

Focus

God saved baby Moses from wicked Pharaoh.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Wonder at the way God saved baby Moses.
- Praise God for saving baby Moses.
- Tell what this story shows about God.
- Name ways God can use us to do God's work.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

In our last session, Jacob's son Joseph had been placed in a position of power second only to Pharaoh himself. Now, hundreds of years later, we hear the ominous words "a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt" (Ex. 1:8).

I strongly suggest that you read this story from the beginning of chapter 1. The new Pharaoh found himself with a burgeoning population of non-Egyptians settled on his borders. It's not difficult to understand his concern. Like any tyrant, his response was to oppress and master the population through enslavement and downright genocide. This story depicts God's people under the control of the Egyptian Empire.

The names Shiphrah and Puah should live on in our biblical memory. Ordered by Pharaoh to kill the Hebrew babies, they not only defy him but cunningly get away with it. Don't you love the line "They are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive"? But it's not just cunning; it's the obedience of the midwives, who, Scripture says, fear God.

Now Pharaoh threatens every Hebrew boy, and the focus narrows down to one family who gives birth to a fine boy. After hiding him for three months, his desperate mother tries something utterly daring. She puts the child in a basket coated with pitch and sets it in the water along the banks of the Nile, ordering the baby's older sister, Miriam, to watch from a distance.

Along comes one of Pharaoh's daughters, of all people. She takes pity on the crying baby even though he's a Hebrew and subject to death. The baby's sister, apparently without any direction from her mother, suggests that she find a Hebrew wet nurse for the child. After the child is weaned, Pharaoh's daughter adopts him as her own son. Only then do we hear his name---Moses---a name that will echo throughout history.

One of the striking features of the story is that God is almost hidden. We hear that the Hebrew midwives fear God and that God rewards them, but the whole drama of Moses in the basket is presented in purely human terms. A desperate family takes desperate action. But through it all, we sense the guiding hand of God, a truth that will become clearer as the story continues.

Though our circumstances may not be as desperate, we find the same thing happening in our lives. We struggle along, trying to solve our problems, often making mistakes. Only later does it become evident that God has been guiding and directing our path.

Steps

Step 1 Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

Step 2 Tell and Wonder

Files: [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 3](#)

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

Re★formed

Don't let kids leave this story without seeing clearly that everyone plays a part in working out God's plan, whether or not they believe in God: the king whose law is thwarted, the soldiers who don't find Moses, his parents who make a plan to save him, the princess who decides to keep Moses, and Miriam who quickly offers the help of her mother. "For all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved." (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 28). Amazing!

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "The Birth of Moses" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions.

NOTE: *It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.*

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Story: The Birth of Moses [Exodus 1:8-12, 22; 2:1-10](#)

Open the Bible to Exodus 1. Tell the kids that today's story happened hundreds of years after Joseph moved his whole family to Egypt. As these years went by, Joseph's family grew and grew until it was so large that the land of Egypt was full of them!

The story follows:

Let's see what the Bible has to say about how today's part of God's great story begins. (Read Exodus 1:8-12.)

Tip

If you aren't moving through the sessions in order, you may want to recall with your group who Joseph is and what the Bible tells us about him. This will help the children to place this story in the greater context of God's Big Story.

What does the Bible say is happening to Joseph's people? (Pause for responses.)

Life wasn't easy for Joseph's people, the Hebrews. Because there were so many of them, the king decided to make them slaves so he could control them. They built whole cities for the king. And even though the king treated them very, very badly, their numbers still grew!

One day the king had had enough. He made a frightening law that said every Hebrew baby boy that was born had to be thrown into the Nile River. But every baby girl could live.

Hebrew families were heartbroken. Not only were they treated badly as slaves, but now their baby boys would be drowned in the river. Life was getting harder and harder every day.

But one father and mother were determined to protect their baby boy. So they hid him inside their house and never went out with him. They didn't tell anyone they had a baby boy.

But there was a problem. As the baby grew, his crying grew louder and louder. When he was three months old, his mother knew that she couldn't keep him hidden much longer. But she was determined to keep him alive.

What do you think the mother has been doing these three months to hide her baby boy? (Pause for responses.)

Realizing that she could hide him no longer, the mother made a basket for her son. She coated the basket with tar so that water wouldn't leak into it. She let it dry. When the basket was ready, she gently placed her little baby boy inside.

Looking every which way, the mother and her daughter took the basket to the river and placed the boy in the water in a place where there were lots of reeds growing. The mother left, but his sister stayed to watch her baby brother so she could tell her mom what happened to him.

It wasn't long before the king's own daughter—a princess of Egypt—came down to the river to bathe. She walked along the riverbank and heard a baby crying. She asked her servant to get the basket.

When the princess opened the basket, she saw that it was one of the Hebrew baby boys. **I wonder what thoughts went through her mind when she saw a precious baby in front of her, even though she knew about her father's law that Hebrew baby boys must be thrown in the river.** (Pause for responses.)

The princess took pity on the sweet baby boy. Just then, his sister jumped out of the weeds she'd been hiding in and said, "Shall I go and get one of the Israelite women to take care of the baby for you?"

The princess smiled at her and said, "Yes! Go!" I can almost see the girl running as fast as her happy legs could carry her. Imagine the mother's face when she heard the happy story. The two of them rushed back toward the river.

When the princess saw them approaching, she handed the baby back to the mother and said, "Here! Take this baby and take care of him for me. I will pay you! And I will name him 'Moses,' which means 'I have taken him out of the water.'"

So Moses' sister and mother—with baby Moses in her arms—went home again, smiles wrapped around their faces and their hearts. Even though the mother knew she would have to bring Moses back to the princess when he grew older, she was full of joy knowing that her baby would live!

Close your eyes and imagine the scene at the house when Moses' father—a slave—came home that night so tired and sad and sore—and saw his son alive! *(Pause for kids to do that.)* **Open your eyes and describe the scene.** *(Pause for kids to do that.)*

Step 3 Pray

*Close with a litany of praise. Have kids stand, and invite them to respond after each line (when you hold up your finger) by clapping and saying, **We praise you, Lord!***

Dear God, thank you for hiding Moses from the soldiers. (We praise you, Lord!)

For having the princess find Moses. (We praise you, Lord!)

For causing the princess to keep baby Moses. (We praise you, Lord!)

For allowing Moses' own mom to care for him. (We praise you, Lord!)

Amen.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Step 4 Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #24 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

**God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extras

1. Arrival Activity: Message Board

Materials: board and chalk or markers, or large sheet of newsprint or paper and markers

Have each person draw a picture or write a message, telling about a time when they knew for sure that God was with them—when they were sick, when they were alone or frightened, or when God answered a prayer, for example. You can have children write on a large piece of paper or on individual papers and then hang them all on the wall. Have them sign their names to what they draw/write. Gather around the board and have the kids tell about/read all the messages. If you are meeting virtually, give each child a chance to hold up their paper and share what they wrote with the group. If there are children in your group for whom drawing or writing is difficult, they can “dictate” their words or pictures to someone else.

2. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- [Preschool: Moses: From Basket to Palace](#)
 - [Kindergarten-1st Grade: Baby Moses](#)
 - [2nd-3rd Grade: The Birth of Moses](#)
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