



**Series:** Exodus: Out of Egypt

**Date:** February 13, 2022

**Speaker:** Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

**Text:** Exodus 1:1-15

**Title:** The Power of Faith and the Futility of Fear

### Introduction

Exodus chapter 1. Last week we had an overview of the book of Exodus and saw some of the themes of this book and I told you the most important thing in your life is what you think about God. Nothing is more important to how you process your past or plan for your future than what you think about God. Nothing is more important for your friendships, career, & family. So, as we walk through the account of God's deliverance of his people in the book of Exodus...GOD is who we are looking for. Him, his work, and his purposes. That's who we are trying to see.

And today the people who will show us what it means to see God rightly...are a group of midwives. The book of Exodus opens by highlighting how a group of oppressed single women went toe to toe with the most powerful man on earth and the

Lord blessed them. It's pretty awesome. Here's the thing: BOTH are going to act out of fear. One will fear people & we'll call that WORLDLY FEAR. the other will fear God. We'll call that Holy Fear. And I think this simple stark contrast is intentional. It's not subtle. **The powerful will be weakened by worldly fear, but the weak will be strengthened by Holy Fear.**

And this sets a VERY important tone for exodus. Worldly Fear is the fears that are based in the circumstances and people of this world. It's REAL and it can be a powerful motivator. Fear will drive you to great heights of achievement. It will make you totally transform yourself so people will like you. It will make you put 10 floaties on your kid when they go near a puddle. It's powerful man. Causes us to be suspicious, anxious, guarded, overwhelmed, and overworked.

My personal fear of failure - man I've had to take that before the Lord for 7 years. It's been right there with me leading this church like a devil on my shoulder. Something happens and that little voice of FEAR...maybe this will be what ruins the church. Fear. Better not say that. Fear. We all deal with it. And you will NEVER think rightly about God until you deal with your fear. Fear is that prominent and pervasive in our lives. And these Hebrew midwives are going to unlock something really important for us. The solution to fear is not LESS fear, it's to fear God. It's not eliminating fear from our lives but changing the focus of our fear and how we fear it. THAT is



going to set some of you free today. You will be set free from worldly fear ONLY as you discover the more powerful fear of God.

And this holy fear, it actually draws us closer in to God and causes us to be warmer and more generous towards others. That's because HOLY fear is something we were made for. It is a reverential awe of God.

**HOLY fear is reverential awe of God**

It is a recognition of how big he is, how small I am. How holy he is, how unholy I am. How GOOD he is, how STEADY he is, how WONDERFUL he is. How LOVING he is.

In action - It is a releasing of control to the one who is actually powerful enough to control things & does so for our good. Worldly Fear is so defeating because we realize over and over WE are not in control of the situation. But we are trying to be. Holy Fear is freeing because we realize someone stronger and better than us is in control.

Here's how we are going to get there. We are going to start by looking at what God has done. Great place to start. That's where the chapter starts. We don't start with oppression; we actually start with a reminder of who God is. AND THEN, we'll see the powerful weakened by fear of man but the weak strengthened by fear of God. All because of what they fear

and how they fear it. And in it all we'll see this rich picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ok let's start by looking at what God had done. vv.1-6

These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each came with his family:

2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

4 Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher.

5 The total number of Jacob's descendants was seventy; Joseph was already in Egypt.

To understand the God of Exodus you need to know the God of Genesis. Because the reason the midwives do what they do is because they know the God of Genesis. And the reason The King of Egypt does what he does...is because nobody told him about the God of Genesis. So, listen up ok. Otherwise, you are gonna walk out of here fearing the wrong thing just like Pharaoh.

READY? HERE IT COMES. THE ORIGIN STORY! 5 MIN. In the beginning...Nah gonna fast forward a bit from there. But the God who made EARTH...WHO MADE THE UNIVERSE...WHO MADE ANIMALS & PLANTS...AND WHO MADE PEOPLE...That God. THAT God made a promise to a guy named Abraham in



Genesis 15 that becomes THE thread of the book of Genesis. Keeps coming back to it. He's going to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the skies AND all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. And Abraham feared God. He understood Holy Fear. He went through some things where he could either fear God or fear the world around him. Chose God & God blessed that. And the most important thing he did was pass down Holy Fear to his kids. Well, by the time we get to Abraham's grandson Jacob, God has also added something to his promise - he WILL give them the land of Canaan. Gonna be important.

When we look at verses 1-5 it says Jacob and his 11 sons came to Egypt and it gives us a roll call. They came to Egypt BECAUSE there was a famine in the land they were living. And one of Jacob's sons was already living in Egypt - his son Joseph. If you read the last chapter of Genesis, you'll see the finale of the story of Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his brothers. But God remained with him & Joseph clung to the holy fear of God his great grandad had passed down. So even though the world around him was bleak, he didn't fear. That truth is repeated over and over in Genesis. And eventually Joseph rose to great power in Egypt. Change in circumstance. 2nd in command to Pharaoh because of the wisdom God provided him. So, when famine came, Joseph was in a position of power to provide for people who couldn't provide for themselves. So, Jacob's sons come down to Egypt to get some

help. And there...to their shock and horror...is their little brother. Well, instead of enacting vengeance...Joseph retains that holy fear. And he says "what you meant for evil, God meant for good. To bring about the salvation of his people." So, Joseph forgives them and Pharaoh...who owes the survival of his kingdom to Joseph...welcomes Joseph's whole family to come live in the best land of Egypt. They are like the VIPs of Egypt because Pharaoh saw that the God of Joseph was powerful. And assumed if he took care of Joseph, Joseph's God would take care of him.

The big thing we gotta see right here. That we are REMINDED of before we get into this whole interaction between midwives and pharaoh...is that The God of the midwives is the God who has always been faithful to his people and to the promise he made to them. THAT is what you need to know from the opening 8 verses of exodus 1.

**Ex 1.1-8: The one all-powerful God will do what he says**

And that may sound trivial, but the knowledge of this God is going to be the difference between the Egyptians and the the Israelites. Verses 6-8 start to show us this difference.

**6 Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation eventually died.**



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Genesis 50 tells a little more about Joseph's death. And when his time was approaching, he gathered his brothers and told them the exodus would happen

24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Genesis 50.24

That's the land of Canaan. The promised land - the land of Canaan. Here's what I want you to see - The land of Egypt was never their home. It was a temporary place of residence. Not their home. THIS WAS A WONDERFUL BLESSING...but not their permanent home. And he's choosing in his last words...to remind them that the one all-powerful God will do what he says. And it would be a mistake for the people of God to shift in their mind to thinking of Egypt as their home. They were temporary residents. And the New Testament reminds us we are the same way. Heb 13.14 tells us this world is not our home. 1 Peter calls us sojourners in a foreign land.

In other words, these temporary circumstances...are not saviors. Here in 21st century America, man we've been blessed with the comfortable fertile soil not too different than their Egypt. And some of you God has blessed with wealth and family and all kinds of things. BUT don't mistake circumstances for a savior.

Or you will wind up like the Rich Young Ruler of Matthew 19. Who followed Jesus right up until Jesus told him to give away all his money. Which he doesn't do to everyone, just those who have made it their savior. Circumstances change. But the one all-powerful God will do what he says. In fact, verse 7 of Exodus 1 is our clue to that:

7 But the Israelites were fruitful, increased rapidly, multiplied, and became extremely numerous so that the land was filled with them.

Why are they increasing rapidly? God is showing them that even with Joseph gone, he remains actively in control and is actively working to fulfill his promise. He's making them as many as the stars in the sky. And then Uh oh, here comes a circumstance shift:

8 A new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.

This new king didn't know about Joseph or the God of Genesis. Who had saved his people and been faithful to his people time and again. The MIDWIVES - they knew of the faithfulness of God. HOW? Super obvious question. But how do the midwives know to trust a God who they've personally not seen work...YET. It's coming but what gives them courage?



SOMEBODY told them. Their parents. And their parents' parents. The faithfulness of God was passed down to them as little girls and they KNOW the one all-powerful God will do what he says because they know he has a history of that. Their holy fear of God is rooted in the faithfulness of God.

PARENTS - DO YOUR CHILDREN know the holy fear of God from you? Again, not the cold harsh fear...that's worldly fear. I'm talking the reverential awe. Do they see you WORSHIPPING God? Do they think you are AMAZED at God? Do they know how you came to faith in Christ? THIS RIGHT HERE is why we say our mission for kids' ministry and student ministry is to partner with families to raise next generation of disciples. Because YOU are the biggest influence on their walk with God.

DO THEY KNOW THE STORY of How God saved you? You can and should teach them about God's faithfulness through the accounts of scripture. But don't neglect showing them how that God is REAL AND ACTIVE NOW! Don't ASSUME they know it.

Do they know that you tithe? Well first, do you tithe? Do you have the kind of holy fear that leads you to say yes, my money is God's money so I give it joyfully and sacrificially to his work regularly. And then...do your kids see it? Invite them in. May not be able to tell them a number yet. But show them generosity is an act of worship because you believe God is working now!

A day is going to come where they will have the midwives moment we are about to see. And what a gift it would be to their faith in that moment to have the familiar story of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Mom, Dad, Mercy Ministry Leaders...all like ammo in their minds to combat the worldly fear the enemy wants to use against them.

And not only do we have the testimony of the church...Every believer actually DOES have the testimony of the gospel! He saved me! And I am to remember that the same spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead LIVES in me! And the all-powerful faithful God who saved me, who is with me, who has secured eternal life for me, who the church testifies to (Heb 12) ...I'm going to trust him! No matter what comes.

Ok, lots of text still to go. Next let's see what this new Pharaoh does. Verses 9-11

9 He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and powerful than we are. 10 Come, let's deal shrewdly with them; otherwise, they will multiply further, and when war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and leave the country." 11 So the Egyptians assigned taskmasters over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. They built Pithom and Rameses as supply cities for Pharaoh.



What is his ultimate fear? His ultimate fear is that the Israelites will leave the country. What ends up happening? They leave the country. I think this is just a little side note on fear, not the ultimate point. But worldly fear is a terrible motivator for making leadership decisions. And in this case - Pharaoh's worldly fear of losing power leads him to disdain the very blessing God had given him. Power is his true god. And he is afraid of anything that threatens his power.

Worldly fear will lead you to put down others so you can elevate yourself. It will lead you to build defense walls in your life, so you are never somebody who is in need. It will lead to constant mistrust of people. And you might get really successful at building your own little, tiny temporary kingdom that way. But make no mistake, worldly fear is never resolved by building up your kingdom. That only intensifies the fear because now there's more that can be taken from you. That's why this king was so paranoid. Watch what happens

12 But the more they oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. 13 They worked the Israelites ruthlessly 14 and made their lives bitter with difficult labor in brick and mortar and in all kinds of fieldwork. They ruthlessly imposed all this work on them.

What is going on? God is fulfilling his promise as they suffer. As their suffering increases, God takes them from a small number to many. Which is what he promised he would do. Make Abraham's offspring as many as the stars in the sky. **And the one all-powerful God will do what he says.** It gets bad for God's people.

This is the second of 3 times where things look like they are going bad for Israel, but God is at the same time working something very good for them.

#### **Ex 1.9-14 Suffering is bitter, but God is faithful**

- Verse 6 - Joseph dies - BUT verse 7 the Israelites increased.
- Verse 11 - They were enslaved - Verse 12 BUT the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied
- Verse 16 - Midwives will be ordered to kill children. Verse 17 - HOWEVER they feared God and Israel multiplied.

Listen to me suffering sets the stage for the work of God in a way that nothing else can. Because as you are weakened...you are given the opportunity to find strength in him and his plan instead of finding strength in you and your plan. Suffering isn't just the place where you "make it through." It is so often the setting where God actually does a lot of his deepest work.



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All throughout scripture, Old and New Testament, God's people suffer. God's people just aren't the powerful ones in most narratives. They are the oppressed & marginalized. And as they choose Holy Fear...choosing to depend on the Powerful one true God...over and above their circumstances, God is glorified, and they are strengthened. Because Holy Fear STRENGTHENS you! It's awesome.

Ok let's see the last section of chapter 1. Gonna read you vv 15-22.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives — the first, whose name was Shiprah, and the second, whose name was Puah — 16 “When you help the Hebrew women give birth, observe them as they deliver. If the child is a son, kill him, but if it's a daughter, she may live.”

17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this and let the boys live?”

19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.”

Love this. Did they lie? Well, we don't know. Obviously, some time had passed between the command to kill and the visible proof that they didn't. They may have gone back home to the Hebrew women and said “whatever you do, don't call us until after they are born. That's all you need to know.” What we do know is they were in a decision of who to give allegiance to. And at risk of their lives, they gave their allegiance to the one true God. And it is not their words, but their actions, that God blesses.

20 So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very numerous. 21 Since the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 22 Pharaoh then commanded all his people, “You must throw every son born to the Hebrews into the Nile but let every daughter live.”

In this day & time you really don't get more powerLESS than enslaved single women. And you don't get more powerFUL than the king of Egypt. And here they are the powerless choosing to defy the powerful. Why? Because they feared the God of their people more than they feared the worst Pharaoh could do to them.

This was their moment. Just like it would be Esther's moment when she stood up to power in order to protect the people of God. Just like it would be Rahab's moment to protect the people of God at risk of her own life. The testimony of the courage of the women of God in scripture are powerful and





they are many. And God blessed the Hebrew midwives. He gave them families of their own and you KNOW they passed the story down of how their God had been faithful to them.

### **Exodus 1.15-22 - Holy Fear unlocks the power of God**

And what happened? Just as the Israelites multiplied, so did Pharaoh's fear. So now he makes his private genocide plan PUBLIC. And THAT move, we'll see next week, sets the stage for the exodus. In fact, it will be this fear-based order that God will use to make the greatest leader in Israel's history a member of Pharaoh's very own home first.

#### **Closing**

How do you move from worldly fear to holy fear? The answer is to embrace the truth this passage is pointing you towards. I told you last week Exodus points to our need for Jesus. The attempt by a tyrant king to take the life of the son who he felt would threaten his throne - That is how the story of Jesus opens.

Mary & Joseph experienced the Holy Fear when the angels visited them before Jesus' birth. When the shepherds came in from the countryside. When they saw the young boy Jesus teaching from the scriptures.

When the disciples got around Jesus, they experienced this holy fear as he healed people & calmed raging seas & sent out demons. But this fear didn't make them guarded. It drew them close. It even drew little children close. Why?

Because the closer they came they found both power and love. They were called family. They were given purpose. He used his power not to enslave them for himself...but in a manner exactly opposite of Pharaoh he used his power to serve. To set people free from bondage. To give his life as a ransom for many. When you see Jesus' IMMENSE power. The God who created the world now in human form...and you see that power put to work in an act of great sacrifice to save you from your sin...it draws you close to him. See the gospel says you were a sinner in bondage to your sin. Unable to save yourself.

**we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, 5 made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! 6 -- Ephesians 2:3-6 (CSB)**

And Christ came to make a way for your exodus from captivity. But you have to receive it. YOU have to receive it.

**8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — -- Ephesians 2:7-8 (CSB)**





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And when you do, you choose to follow a God whose power & goodness draw you close.

How could it not? And when you accept the forgiveness he offers you...when you make him Lord of your life. You don't find oppression. You find freedom in serving the one who gave his life for you.

Whatever it is you fear right now...Whatever is controlling your decisions. I promise it is nothing like the freedom & peace that comes from the holy fear of God.