

1. The Birth of Moses

Objectives

The children will:

- hear the story of Moses' birth.
- discover that God was at work in Moses' life through the actions of courageous women.
- explore ways to discover God at work in their lives.

Bible Story

The Birth of Moses
Exodus 1:8–2:10

Bible Verse

She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I pulled him out of the water."

Exodus 2:10b

Focus for the Teacher

Many years before Moses was born, an Israelite boy named Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. After many struggles, Joseph became second-in-command to Pharaoh in Egypt. Eventually Joseph was reunited with his family, and Joseph's entire family moved from Canaan to Egypt. Joseph's family, the Israelites, thrived in Egypt, and for a time they received special treatment because of Joseph's importance and standing. But times change—people die and new kings come to power.

At the beginning of the Book of Exodus we learn that after Joseph died, a king came to power who did not remember Joseph. Instead of granting special privileges to the Israelites, the king became afraid of them and made them slaves. Even after the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, the number of Israelites continued to grow. The king decided population control of the Israelites, also known as the Hebrew people, was necessary. The king instructed the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill any Hebrew baby boys who were born. Courageously, the midwives did not follow Pharaoh's orders. When Pharaoh asked the

midwives why they were letting the Hebrew baby boys live, they lied and told Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were giving birth without their help. Not to be deterred, Pharaoh decreed

that all Hebrew baby boys must be thrown into the Nile River.

Into this hostile environment a Hebrew baby boy was born. His mother was understandably unwilling to follow the king's decree to drown her baby. Instead she hid him for three months. Presumably at this point the baby was too noisy or too mobile to continue to hide. So, the mother did end up putting her baby boy into the Nile River, but first she put him in a basket. Instead of

drowning, the baby floated among the reeds in the river until another woman, who happened to be Pharaoh's daughter, discovered him. Pharaoh's daughter took pity on the child, whom she recognized as a Hebrew baby who was supposed to be drowned, and saved his life.

God was at work early in Moses' life through the actions of four courageous women. This story reminds us God is at work in the world. It also encourages us to consider how we are called to do God's work.

This story
reminds us
God is at work
in the world.

Explore Interest Groups

Be sure that adult leaders are waiting when the first child arrives. Greet and welcome each child. Get the children involved in an activity that interests them and introduces the theme for the day's activities.

Weave a Basket

- Give each child a bowl.
- Have each child make a series of cuts in the bowl from the rim to the bottom of the bowl, spacing the cuts evenly around the container. The exact number of cuts is unimportant, as long as there is an odd number of cuts.
- Invite each child to choose a color of yarn and cut a piece about three or four feet long.
- Have each child tie one end of the yarn tightly around one of the paper tabs of the bowl, near the bottom of the bowl, securing with a knot.
- Encourage each child to weave the loose end of the yarn through the slits in the bowl, alternating putting the yarn over and under the tabs.
- As the children weave, have them push the yarn toward the bottom of the container.
- If children reach the end of their yarn before finishing the basket, have them tie on another piece of yarn and keep weaving.
- Encourage each child to keep weaving until reaching the top of the container.
- Have each child tuck the loose end of yarn underneath a few of the woven strands and then tie a knot to secure the loose end. Cut off any extra yarn.
- **Say:** You have made some beautiful baskets today.
- **Ask:** What are some things that baskets are used for?
- **Say:** In today's Bible story, we will hear about a basket being used for an unusual and special purpose.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide paper bowls, scissors, and yarn
- ✓ *Tip:* If you have younger children in your class, you may wish to precut some bowls.
- ✓ *Note:* The greater the number of cuts used, the more round the resulting basket will be.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide a large blanket.
- ✓ Recruit two volunteers to hold the blanket up to form a screen.
- ✓ *Tip:* If you have a large class, choose more than one child at a time to be the guesser and choose more than one child to hide each time.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide marbles, aluminum foil, trays for water, and towels.
- ✓ Fill the trays with water and set them on towels.

Who Is Hiding?

- Choose one child to be the guesser.
- Have the guesser step to a part of the room where she or he cannot see the rest of the group.
- Choose one of the remaining children to hide behind the blanket. Have the remaining children switch places so it is not as obvious who is hiding.
- Invite the guesser to rejoin the group and try to guess who is hiding.
- When the child guesses correctly, have the missing child join the group.
- Choose another child to be the guesser and continue to play the game.
- **Say:** Hiding has been fun in this game. In today's Bible story, we will hear about a mother who needed to hide her baby for a serious and important reason.

Floating Marbles

- Give each child a marble.
- **Ask:** What would happen if you placed your marble in the tray of water? (It would sink.)
- Let the children place the marbles in the water and watch them sink.
- **Ask:** How could you keep your marble from sinking?
- Allow children to share their ideas
- Give each child a square of aluminum foil.
- Encourage each child to use the foil to design a basket or boat that will support a marble when placed in water.
- Have the children test their foil baskets to see if they will float while holding a marble.
- If the trays are big enough, let the children blow their baskets across the water.
- **Say:** In today's Bible story, we will hear about a woman who needed to keep something important afloat.

Large Group

Bring all the children together to experience the Bible story. Use a bell to alert the children to the large-group time.

Who Am I Looking For?

- Have the children stand in a circle.
- **Say:** I am going to begin to describe someone in our circle. If I might be describing you, remain standing. If I am not describing you, sit down and try to guess who I am looking for.
- Choose a child and begin describing that child using sentences beginning with "I am looking for someone who..." For example, you might say, "I am looking for someone who is wearing blue. I am looking for someone who is wearing blue and has short hair. I am looking for someone who is wearing blue, has short hair, and has tennis shoes on."
- Continue describing the child until he or she is the only one standing.
- Have the children stand up again and play several more rounds as time permits.
- **Say:** As we hear our Bible story today, we will be looking for people who are doing God's work.

Moses' Story

- **Say:** Today we are beginning a six-week study about Moses. Moses was a prophet. A prophet is someone who delivers messages for God. The story of Moses' life is found in the second book of the Bible.
- **Ask:** What is the second book of the Bible? (Exodus)
- **Say:** Today we are going to hear the story of Moses' birth. We are going to hear the story as if Moses were telling it to us with the help of some friends.
- Invite your recruited volunteers to tell the story from **Reproducible 1a: The Birth of Moses**.
- Thank your volunteers for telling the story.
- **Ask:** Why was Moses' life in danger when he was born? (Pharaoh had made a law that all Israelite baby boys should be thrown in the Nile River.)
- **Say:** It was a scary time for the Israelites. They were slaves in Egypt and Pharaoh was trying to keep their population from growing.
- **Ask:** How do you think Moses' mother felt when she saw that her baby was a boy? (scared, worried)
- **Say:** Moses' mother did what she could to protect her baby. She was willing to let Pharaoh's daughter raise her son if it meant he would live.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide copies of **Reproducible 1a: The Birth of Moses**.
- ✓ Recruit a volunteer to come and read the story of Moses each week during this study. *Optional:* If Bible times costumes are available, have your volunteer dress as a shepherd.
- ✓ Invite several confident readers to help tell the Bible story. Give each reader a copy of the story. Encourage the readers to follow along as Moses tells the story. Have the readers read in unison the words that are in bold type.

Prepare

- ✓ On a piece of mural paper or posterboard, write the heading "Four Courageous Women." Underneath the heading write: two midwives, Moses' mother, Pharaoh's daughter.
- ✓ Display the poster where the children will be able to see it.

Seeing God at Work

- **Say:** Today we heard the story of Moses' birth. When Moses grew up, he did several important jobs for God. He wouldn't have been able to do God's work if his life had not been saved when he was a baby. Four women acted bravely to keep Moses alive.
- Show the children the poster.
- **Ask:** What did the two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, do to protect Moses and all Hebrew baby boys? (They refused to kill the Hebrew baby boys.)
- **Say:** Pharaoh asked the midwives to kill the Hebrew baby boys. Pharaoh was the most powerful man in Egypt. But the midwives knew that what he was asking them to do was wrong. They refused to follow Pharaoh's order. The midwives were brave and did the right thing.
- **Ask:** How did Moses' mother protect her baby? (She refused to throw him in the river. She hid him for three months. She put him in a basket on the river.)
- **Say:** Moses' mother took a chance to save her son. It was a brave thing to do. Technically she did put her baby in the river as Pharaoh had decreed, but she put him in a basket first.
- **Ask:** Who found baby Moses in his basket on the river? (Pharaoh's daughter) Do you think Pharaoh's daughter knew about her father's decree that all Hebrew baby boys were to be killed? (probably)
- **Say:** Like the midwives and Moses' mother, Pharaoh's daughter was brave too. She knew her father's law about Hebrew baby boys but she chose to save the baby's life.
- **Ask:** Do you think God was at work in this story to keep Moses alive? How do you see God at work in this story?
- Allow children an opportunity to share their thoughts.
- **Say:** God often works through the actions of people. We are God's hands and feet in the world. As we've seen, God worked through the actions of these four courageous women to protect Moses.
- Invite children to hold their hands up to their eyes and pretend they are looking through binoculars while you pray.
- **Pray:** God, thank you for stories of brave women doing your work. Help us to see the people around us that are doing your work. Help us to look for ways to share your love with other people. Amen.

Bible Verse Back and Forth

- Show the children today's Bible verse.
- **Say:** Today's Bible verse tells us how Moses got his name.
- Encourage the children to read the verse with you.
- **Ask:** Who is speaking in this verse? Who gave Moses his name? (Pharaoh's daughter)
- **Say:** In Hebrew, the word *Moses* sounds like the word that means "pull out."
- Divide the children into two groups.
- **Say:** Some of the words in this verse are spoken by Pharaoh's daughter, but not all of them.
- Assign one group to read the words spoken by Pharaoh's daughter. Have the other group play the role of the narrator and read the remaining words.
- Encourage the children to say the verse several times in the manner described.
- Dismiss children to their small groups.

Prepare

- ✓ Write this week's Bible verse on a markerboard or a piece of mural paper and place it where it can easily be seen. ("She named him Moses, 'because,' she said, 'I pulled him out of the water.'" Exodus 2:10b)

Small Groups

Divide the children into small groups. You may organize the groups around age levels or around readers and nonreaders. Keep the groups small, with a maximum of ten children in each group. You may need to have more than one group of each age level.

Young Children

- **Say:** We will be learning about Moses' life for six weeks. We are going to start making a big book about Moses. We will add to our book each week.
- Show the children the poster that says *Lessons from the Life of Moses*.
- **Say:** This will be the cover of our book.
- Encourage the children to work together to decorate the book cover.
- **Say:** Today we heard the story of the birth of Moses.
- **Ask:** Why was baby Moses' life in danger? (Pharaoh had ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be drowned.) Who did God's work and protected Moses? (the midwives, Moses' mother, and Pharaoh's daughter)
- Show the children the other posterboard.
- Encourage the children to work together to plan an illustration to go along with the words. One possibility is Moses' mother placing Moses in the river in a basket. Have the children draw the picture.
- Stack the two pieces of posterboard face up with the book cover lying on top.
- Tape the left edges of the posterboards together to form the beginning of a book.
- **Say:** The midwives, Moses' mother, and Pharaoh's daughter all did God's work and helped protect Moses. There are many ways to do God's work. Any time you help someone or show love to someone you are doing God's work.
- **Ask:** What are some ways you can do God's work?
- Allow children an opportunity to share their ideas.
- **Say:** This week look for ways you can do God's work.
- Save the big book to be used next week.
- **Pray:** God, thank you for stories that help us learn about you. Help us to do your work in the world. Amen.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide two pieces of posterboard, markers, crayons, and masking tape.
- ✓ Use a marker to write the following words in large block letters on one of the pieces of posterboard: *Lessons from the Life of Moses*.
- ✓ Use a marker to write the following words at the bottom of the other piece of posterboard, leaving room above the words for illustrations: "God works through people."

Older Children

- Have the children work together to tape the cardboard box shut and then cover the entire box with mural paper.
- **Say:** We will be learning about Moses' life for six weeks. We are going to use the box you have covered to make a cube to help us remember the lessons we learn as we hear about Moses' life.
- Have the children work together to write the words, *Lessons from the Life of Moses* on one side of the box. Let the children decorate this side of the box.
- **Ask:** Why was Moses' life in danger when he was born? (Pharaoh had decreed that all Hebrew baby boys should be killed.) Why was Pharaoh afraid the Israelites would take over Egypt? (There were so many of them.)
- **Say:** Earlier we discussed how God was at work early on in Moses' life through the actions of those around him.
- **Ask:** Who was doing God's work and protecting Moses? (the midwives, Moses' mother, Pharaoh's daughter)
- Have the children turn the box to a blank side and write the words, "God works through people." Let the children decorate this side of the box.
- **Say:** There are many ways to do God's work.
- **Ask:** What are some ways you can do God's work? How does it make you feel to know God is working through you?
- Allow children an opportunity to share their ideas.
- **Say:** One way we can do God's work is to pray for other people.
- **Ask:** Whom would you like to pray for today?
- Invite children to share prayer concerns.
- **Pray:** God, we lift the people we have named up to you as well as those we name silently. Help us to look for ways to do your work in the world. Amen.
- Save the story cube to be used next week.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide a square cardboard box, mural paper, tape, scissors, markers, and crayons.
- ✓ *Tip:* Any size cardboard box can be used. Make sure the box is large enough to allow space for writing.

The Birth of Moses

Hello! My name is Moses. Today I want to tell you about something that happened shortly after I was born. At the time of my birth, my people, who were known as the Israelites, or the Hebrews, were slaves in Egypt.

This doesn't sound good for the Israelites.

It wasn't good. The ruler of Egypt, who was known as Pharaoh, forced the Israelites to make mortar and bricks, work in the fields, and do other hard labor for the Egyptians. Even while they were working as slaves, the numbers of the Israelites continued to grow. Pharaoh became worried that the Israelites would take over Egypt. He decided to use his power to keep this from happening.

Uh-oh. What did he do?

Pharaoh talked to two midwives named Shiphrah and Puah. Midwives helped pregnant women when it was time for their babies to be born. Pharaoh told the midwives that when they delivered a Hebrew baby boy they were to kill it. Hebrew baby girls were allowed to live.

That's terrible!

Well, Shiphrah and Puah thought it was terrible too. They refused to kill the Hebrew babies. Pharaoh called for the midwives and asked them why they were letting the baby boys live.

What did they say?

They told him that the Hebrew women were so strong they were giving birth without the help of the midwives. These two women were brave when speaking to Pharaoh.

Good for the midwives!

Pharaoh was determined to keep the Israelite population from growing. He ordered that all baby boys born to the Hebrews should be thrown into the Nile River where they would drown.

Reproducible 1a, continued

That's horrible!

It was a scary time for the Israelites. But one mother found a way to save her son.

How did she do that?

This Hebrew woman gave birth to a boy. At first she was able to hide him from the Egyptians. When the baby was three months old, she realized she would no longer be able to hide him. So she made a basket and covered the inside of the basket with tar so it would be waterproof. She put the baby in the basket and placed that basket among the reeds in the river. The baby's sister watched to see what would happen.

What happened?

The daughter of Pharaoh was walking by the river and found the baby in the basket.

What did she do?

Pharaoh's daughter recognized the baby was a Hebrew and she felt sorry for him. The baby's sister appeared and offered to find a Hebrew woman to take care of the baby. When Pharaoh's daughter agreed, she went and got their mother. Pharaoh's daughter asked the woman to care for the baby until it was old enough to come and live with her at the palace.

So the baby's mother was able to keep him after all?

Yes, the baby's mother took care of him until he was old enough to go and live with Pharaoh's daughter. Then Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and named him Moses.

Based on Exodus 1:8–2:10