



Let's pray: September 2022

How can we pray well as we head into this new month?

 **home
for good**

If we were to sit down and list some well-known Biblical heroes, I don't think it would be long before Moses got a mention. Born into slavery and suffering, raised as a prince, guilty of murder, he lived as a fugitive on the run from justice. After hearing from God through a mysterious burning bush, Moses returns to Egypt and is joined by his brother, and together they declare to Pharaoh that God wants his people to be free. It takes miraculous signs and devastating plagues for the King to finally relent, but he does, and the Israelites leave Egypt and begin their journey towards the land that God had promised them – and that's just the beginning of the story.

Moses is often presented and spoken about as the main character in his story – but it's not just his story. The first few chapters of the book of Exodus introduce us to five important women, each of whom played a significant role in Moses' life.



The first two women we meet are Shiphrah and Puah, two Hebrew midwives who make a courageous and bold decision. They are given a command from the King of Egypt: "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth," he says, "Kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." We read that these midwives fear God, and as such, they disobey the Pharaoh, saving lives – one of those being baby Moses. In a chapter that spans centuries of Israel's history, these two Hebrew midwives are individually noted by name while the King of Egypt is not. These women – Shiphrah and Puah – matter.



The third woman we meet is Moses' mother, who we later learn is named Jochebed. She gives birth to her son, into a world of chaos and danger, and, seeking more than anything to keep him safe, she separates herself from him. She prepares a basket – I love her creativity and innovation, coating it with tar and pitch to give him the best possible chance of survival – and she puts her beloved son in it and places him among the reeds and bulrushes of the river Nile. I can't fathom the fear or the level of genuine danger she must have been experiencing, believing that a basket in a river was a safer place for her son than her home. I can't fathom the trust and the faith that act would have taken to believe that he would be found by someone who would care for him.



The fourth woman we meet is Moses' sister, whose name is Miriam. Exodus chapter two verse four says that when Moses was placed in the river in his basket, Miriam stands at a distance, watching to see what would happen to her brother. And when she sees that he has been found by our fifth character, Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam breaks that distance, getting in close and intervening with ideas and solutions that ensure that Moses is cared for in the best possible way, and that the relationships between the child, his birth family and the family who will now care for him and call him son are managed and navigated well.

I wonder how the story would have panned out if just one of these women hadn't been part of it? If Shiphrah or Puah hadn't made their courageous decision; if Jochebed had tried to find a way to hide Moses at home for longer; if Miriam hadn't waited by the river; if Pharaoh's daughter hadn't gone down to that part of the river to wash that day? We can't know for sure, but there's a definite possibility that the story of Moses could have had a very different outcome.

I wonder did these women know the enormous impact their actions would have? Did what they were doing feel heroic, or did it feel more like doing their job, loving in difficult circumstances, responding to the opportunity or the need in front of them?

I'm not sure they knew that Moses would go on to lead the Israelites out of slavery and into freedom and promise. I'm not sure they knew that centuries later he would be remembered as such a significant character in God's story. But even as a tiny baby, they saw his value and worth. They recognised that something needed to be done to ensure that this precious life was protected and cared for. And so they stepped up and they played their part.

Often when I've been told the story of Moses, he has been the main character, central to an account of God's great love, protection and plans for His people. But the truth is that this story doesn't belong to Moses alone. Rather, his exists in the midst of a bigger, complex, tragic narrative. I don't know about you, but acknowledging this leads me to a place of questioning: Why Moses? Why his family? What about the other Hebrew infant boys, who weren't heard, found and raised by royalty? What about their mothers and sisters whose goodbye was perhaps a final one?

Sitting in that place of questioning, acknowledging the nuance and the intricacies, can be a good thing, helping us to acknowledge the scale of injustice.

Perhaps a focus on the 'one' can draw our focus towards our own personal response; what could I do to care for and seek justice for this one individual?



Every year, around 35,000 children and teenagers will enter the UK care system. Each and every one of them has worth and value, brimming with potential. Each and every one of them deserves a home where they will be safe, cared for and enabled to thrive, whether that's for a short period of time before returning to their birth family, with a short-term or long-term foster family, with a kinship carer or special guardian, a supported lodgings host or an adoptive family. Each and every one deserves to be welcomed into a community where they can find friendship, support, encouragement and a sense of belonging.

Together we can find a home for every child who needs one. What part could you play, for the 'one'?

Points for prayer



- 1.** Thank God for the beauty that exists in community as we each bring our own unique qualities, gifts and stories. Give thanks for the fact that each one of us has something to offer to welcome and support children, young people and families in our communities. Pray that individuals, families and whole churches will be inspired to consider what their part could be. And let's thank God for His love for us; love that is not reliant on what we do, but that is lavished on us purely because we are His children.
- 2.** Pray for children and teenagers who are in or have been in care. Let's thank God for them – for the gifts, stories and unique personalities that make them who they are. Praise God for the fact that we can see reflections of Him through these children, made in His image. Pray that the Church and wider society will see that these children have such enormous worth and value; that they are brimming with potential, and that when they thrive, our communities are stronger.
- 3.** Let's give thanks for foster carers, kinship carers, special guardians, adoptive parents and supported lodgings hosts and others who raise and love the children in their care.
- 4.** Give thanks for the professionals involved in the lives of children and young people; for social workers, healthcare workers, teachers and classroom assistants, sports coaches and others who lead, educate, support and encourage.
- 5.** Let's give thanks for friends, family members and church communities who provide welcome, belonging and stability,
- 6.** Give thanks for those who share of their money, their resources, their wisdom, their skills – all to demand more and to strive for better.



Reflective prayer idea

This month, we encourage you to spend some time exploring the supporting characters in our favourite Bible stories.

Consider what we can learn from the individuals in the Bible who perhaps aren't the focus of the story, but still play an important role.

Take some time to read a story or two, and **notice** who is there.

Who is named?

Who isn't named?

Ask yourself: What is happening in this moment? What do you imagine this person thought or felt in this moment?

Reflect: What can we learn from this individual?