

Brazil: Teaching notes

Sunday School Notes

Lesson aim: to show how God cares for us wherever we are, and that evil people cannot stop his wonderful plan

Passage: Exodus 2:1-10

Memory verse: Hebrews 13:5 *'God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'*

Ice Breaker: Ask the children where they were born. At hospital? or at home? in a hurry, or very premature? Then you may want to talk about the story of the eight children described on TOGO page 6-7, who were left by their mother, and whose father left them at the side of the river Amazon to fend for themselves. This then provides a lead into the Bible story.

Story: 3500 years ago, the people of Israel were living in Egypt. The King of Egypt, Pharaoh, had ordered them to work as slaves building big cities and temples. He hated the Israelites, and he wanted to destroy them completely. He ordered that whenever an Israelite baby boy was born, he must be thrown into the river Nile where he would drown.

There was a young man called Amram and his wife was called Jochebed. She gave birth to a baby boy, and they tried to keep him a secret. They did not want their lovely baby thrown into the river. But as Moses got bigger he also got noisier! People could hear him crying, and they couldn't keep him a secret any longer. She knew that Pharaoh had said that every baby boy had to be put in the river, so she came up with a cunning plan.

Jochebed took a basket, coated it with thick black tar to make it waterproof so that it would float, and then she placed her precious baby son Moses in the basket, put a lid on the basket, and floated it among the reeds at the edge of the river. She also told her daughter Miriam to hide nearby and keep watch to see what happened to him.

Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to have a swim, and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant girl to see what it was. She opened the basket and there was baby Moses, crying! When Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby crying she took pity on him. She knew that her father had said that all such babies must die, but she was determined to protect this baby boy. As she was looking at him, Miriam appeared and said, 'Shall I go and get one of the Israelite women to nurse the baby?', and Pharaoh's daughter said yes. Miriam went and called her mother! Pharaoh's daughter paid Jochebed to look after her own baby boy, and when Moses was older he went to live with Pharaoh's daughter and became her son. He grew up in Pharaoh's palace, which was all part of God's plan to prepare him to be the great leader and deliverer God had chosen for the people of Israel.

Application: What would have happened to the people of Israel if Moses had not been protected by God? God is in charge of our lives and has a plan for each one of us. Sometimes we are afraid about what is going to happen, especially when we are very young. The story of Moses helps us to understand that God sees every single one of us, and watches over our lives. It also tells us that wicked people cannot destroy God's plan to save us. God protected Moses and raised him up to deliver Israel. God protected Jesus in the same way when King Herod wanted to kill him, and raised him up to be our Saviour. God always knows exactly what he is doing.

This story does seem like natural territory for five year olds, but it raises lots of issues that teenagers often think about: is God in control of the world? How does he deal with evil? How should we value human life? Do we always have to obey the law? Feel free to pick up on as many or as few of these as you have time for! Here are some questions more central to the passage.

- 1. What had Pharaoh commanded should be done to every newborn Israelite baby boy?** You could explore why Pharaoh might have done this – fear of a group of foreigners getting too big in number and threatening his way of life. You could also make comparisons with situations today where children are ‘unwanted’ and rejected by society – through abortion in the U.K., or infanticide e.g. in societies where boys are wanted more than girls.
- 2. What had Amram and Jochebed been commanded to do with their baby son? How did they get round this command?** There comes a point where we have to obey God rather than men. Amram and Jochebed refused to kill their son, made in God’s image like every human being, but it is interesting that they found a way around the law by placing Moses in the river but in a floating basket, and under careful protection.
- 3. ‘The fact that Pharaoh’s daughter found Moses among the rushes was a convenient accident.’ Discuss.** Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that God only intervenes in the world by performing miracles. What this story demonstrates is that he uses the natural, everyday things to weave together his plan. This baby boy could have been found by anyone, but the one person who was sure to be allowed to protect him was Pharaoh’s daughter.
- 4. How did God use Pharaoh’s daughter to help prepare Moses to be a leader for Israel?** By being taken into Pharaoh’s household Moses saw how a country was run, had the best education, and grew up with Pharaoh’s son, the man he would one day have to face and make his demand ‘God says ‘Let my people go!’ God had also planned for Moses to spend forty years as a shepherd in the back of the desert to teach him humility
- 5. In what ways does our society treat human life as cheap or of no value?** Ask the group how older people respond to them when they are out on the street in a group. Ask anyone in the group who is not ‘white anglo-saxon’ how they get treated by other people when they are on the bus or train or in school.
- 6. How do other parts of the world treat human life as cheap or worthless?** See the story of the family on pages 6-7 of TOGO. Get one of the group to read the story, and then discuss the plight of street children in the developing world.
- 7. What was God’s answer to the terrible times Israel was living through?** It wasn’t a quick answer, but God was raising up among them a deliverer, Moses, who one day would lead them out of Egypt to freedom. God always has his plan to redeem people from the worst that others can do to them, and he is able to restrain evil doers from many of their evil schemes.