

FAITH OF A PARENT

HEBREWS 11:23

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Today is Mothers' Day - and out of the mouth of a few Second Graders let me give you the answers to a few commonly-asked questions about mothers...

Why did God make mothers?

She's the only one who knows where the scotch tape is...
To help us out of there when we were getting born...

How did God make mothers?

He used dirt, just like the rest of us... God made my mom the same like he made me. He just used bigger parts...

What ingredients were used when God made mothers?

God makes moms out of clouds and angel hair and everything nice in the world and one dab of mean... He started with men's bones. Then He mostly used string, I think...

Why did God give you your mother and not some other mom?

We're related... God knew she likes me a lot more than other people's moms like me...

What kind of little girl was your mom?

My mom has always been my mom and none of that other stuff... I don't know because I wasn't there, but my guess would be pretty bossy... They say she used to be nice...

Why did your mom marry your dad?

My dad makes the best spaghetti in the world. And my mom eats a lot... My grandma says that mom didn't have her thinking cap on...

What's the difference between moms and dads?

Moms know how to talk to teachers without scaring them... Dads are taller and stronger, but moms have the real power 'cause she's who you got to ask if you want to sleepover at a friend's house...

What does your mom do in her spare time?

Moms don't do spare time...

What would it take to make your mom perfect?

On the inside, she's already perfect. Outside, I think some plastic surgery...

If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?

She has a weird thing about me keeping my room clean. I'd get rid of that... I'd make her smarter, so she'd know it was my sister who did it - not me... I'd like for her to get rid of those invisible eyes in the back of her head...

In Hebrews 11, we find the story of an Israelite mother - a *good mother*. From all accounts, there's not one thing we would want to change about this mom...

Her name was Jochebed - and her three kids were Aaron, Miriam, and the most famous of the three... **Moses**. Jochebed mothered a nation's deliverer.

Our text actually credits Moses' upbringing not just to his *mom*, but his *parents*. Moses had the blessing of a good dad as well as a faithful mom. Exodus 6:20 identifies the parents by name: "Amram and Jochebed."

But Exodus also provides another detail. In Exodus 2:2 we're told, "So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when *she* saw that he was a beautiful child, *she* hid him three months." Notice, the emphasis in Exodus was on the parenting of Moses' mother.

To be honest, I'm not sure what to make of this...

Why does the writer of Hebrews speak of "parents," while the author of Exodus focuses on "the woman?"

We know that Exodus was written by a full-grown Moses. Whereas, Hebrews was authored by an objective third party - *many years after the fact?*

The perspective of Hebrews is from the outside of the family looking in, while Exodus was written by a family insider... Moses drew from his own memories.

Here's the conclusion I've drawn...

Moses' dad was in the mix. He was on the job. Amram was no absentee father. He made a vital contribution... *supporting his family, creating structure, providing guidance, and courage, and resources.*

But what the child remembered most was the touch and tenderness of his mother. Moses recalled Jochebed's tender words and her nurturing manner.

Dad played a vital part - an indispensable role. No one today is diminishing the job of a dad. Yet there is still a special relationship between a mother and child.

Several years ago, I did some firsthand research among the tattoo parlors on Highway 78 and discovered that “Mom” tattoos outnumber “Dad” tattoos 30 to 1. I interviewed *Painless Paul at Lucky Tattoos*.

Paul said folks are far more likely to get a tattooed tribute to mom over dad. In fact, Painless Paul said when someone asks for a “Dad” tattoo, it’s usually after the old boy has kicked the bucket. It’s a memorial.

But *mom* gets honored with ink while she’s still alive.

Among the painted population, memories of mother conjure up far more tender feelings than those of dad.

And this is not only *true* if you have a *tattoo*...

Ever noticed when the cameras comb the bench at a college football game you never hear a player shout, “I love you, dad.” Those words are always directed to his mom. *A mom has a special place in every child’s heart.*

When my oldest son, Zach, was born, my dad took me aside and warned me. He said, “Sandy, your son will love Kathy more than he’ll love you.” Dad told me, “Get use to it. Don’t be jealous of it. A son loves his mother more than he loves his dad. It’s just life.”

Generally speaking, moms have a tenderness and tolerance that dads lack. You’ve heard of stand-offs between a father and his grown child. The father might say, “I’ll never speak to

him again.” But I’ve never heard of a stand-off between a mother and her child.

A good mom never cuts-off her kid. It doesn’t matter how far he falls, or how low she goes - a mom still sees beauty in her child, *and she refuses to allow it to die.*

Poet John Killinger words it this way, “I believe in the love of all mothers and its importance in the lives of the children they bear. It is stronger than steel, softer than down, and more resilient than a green sapling on the hillside. Her love closes wounds, melts disappointments, and enables the weakest child to stand tall and straight in the fields of adversity.”

This was the love Jochebed had for Moses.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his **parents**, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.” I’m sure Amram provided a fatherly direction. Then Jochebed followed up with a mother’s tenderness. Together they made a good parental team.

In fact, as we look deeper into our text, I think you’ll find the parents of Moses had three chief attributes...

First, **they were protective.** Second, **they saw potential.** And third, **they relied on providence.**

And these are the same ingredients that make for good parents today... Hebrews 11:23 describes **the faith of a parent...** As a father or mother **you hold on** to your child... **you look at** your child... then when the time comes you **let go** of your child. And all three: **holding on, looking at,** and **letting go** - require *faith*.

Parents **hold on** to their children, and **protect** them from danger. Parents **see** beauty in their children, and encourage their **potential**. And eventually parents **let go** of their children and trust in God's **providence**.

And all three actions require tremendous faith.

Notice first, “**By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents...**” Amram and Jochebed were quick to recognize that this world is a dangerous place. It's not conducive or safe for rearing children. The world we live in is full of predators and evildoers who desire to do your children harm.

And like Amram and Jochebed it's a parents' duty to hide their children while they're vulnerable and innocent until they grow and can stand on their own.

It's a mom's responsibility to **hold on** to her children and **protect** them in their formative years. Like **an animal in the wild, a mom's instinct is to protect her young.** If parents don't protect their kids... *who will?*

Yesterday's societal support system of media and schools, and neighbors has disappeared. Apart from the church, parents today are on their own.

Imagine, the situation facing Amram and Jochebed...

An evil, power-mongering despot - Egypt's Pharaoh - ordered the execution of all male Hebrew babies. Throw them into the Nile. Feed them to the crocodiles.

The Jewish historian, **Josephus**, gives us insight into the reason behind the Pharaoh's death sentence. He writes, “**One of Egypt's sacred scribes who was very discerning in**

foretelling future events truly, told the king, that about this time there would be a child born to the Israelites, who if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion low, and would raise the Israelites.”

Pharaoh wanted to crush this prophesied rival. His first plan was to recruit the help of Hebrew midwives, and sabotage the deliveries of the male infants.

But when the midwives refused to cooperate, Pharaoh took off the gloves. He issued a death decree. *Infanticide by drowning. Can you imagine a more cruel way for a child to die?* Imagine your baby tossed into the current - gurgling water into his lungs - his bloated body shredded by the crocs. *Your son alligator bait...*

But as gruesome a picture as I've painted, it's not unlike the spiritual dangers facing our kids today.

History says that the Egyptian Pharaoh wore a coiled serpent on his crown... The serpent was a symbol of Satan. And the devil is out to attack *our* children.

You know about *the child snatchers, the pedophiles, the drug dealers, the gangs, and the school shooters* - but your children are threatened in more subtle ways.

What your child thinks and how he believes is under assault on a daily basis. *A materialistic media - a sexualized and coarsening culture - a godless and violent entertainment industry* - all want to capture the heart and mind of your child. Crocodiles of a different sort circle the water to feed on our children. Parents today have to be vigilant and stay in *protection mode*.

Did you know the average child in America sees 40,000 commercials annually? Advertisers spend \$12 billion a year targeting our kids, trying to influence their values. *Hey, if it didn't work, they'd save their money!*

Each year, a typical teenager views 1500 references to sexual activity on television. Today's parents need to be operating under a *homeland security red alert*.

Ellen Goodman is a liberal columnist. Her opinions run in the Boston Globe and Washington Post. Years ago, she made an astute comment about parenting...

She wrote, "One of your main jobs as a parent is to counter the culture. What the media delivers to kids in masses, you are expected to rebut one at a time..."

Parents are expected to protect their children from an increasingly hostile environment. Are the kids being sold junk food? **Just say no.** Is TV bad? **Turn it off.** Are there messages about sex, drugs, and violence all around? **Counter the culture.**

Mom and dads are expected to screen virtually every aspect of their child's life - from movies, and music, and friends - to video games, and cell phones, and laptops - all the while, earning a living.

Parents see themselves in a struggle for the hearts and minds of their own children. It isn't that they can't say no. It's that there's so much to say no to.

There's been a fundamental shift. We once expected parents to raise children in accordance with a dominant

culture of morality and decency. Today, we expect them to raise their children in opposition to the culture.

It's what makes child-raising harder... It's not just that American families have less time with their kids. It's that we have to spend more of this time doing battle with our own culture. It's like trying to get your children to eat their green beans after they've been told all day about the wonders of Milky Way bars."

Our text tells us for three months Amram and Jochebed spent enormous effort sheltering their baby.

They fed Moses, changed him, and occupied him so he wouldn't cry. They prayed daily that he wouldn't catch the croup or get colicky. Imagine, what would've happened had he coughed or cried at the wrong time...

What if while changing his diaper, Amram had stuck little Moses with a safety pin? One whimper and it could've been curtains for parents *and* child. This is why *Jochebed... went to bed... exhausted every night.*

And if you're a parent, I would imagine that's how you go to bed most nights. Parenting is a tough gig.

It's not for the faint of heart. And I'm just a dad - *it's more-so for a mom...* Parents, one day your kids will be equipped to make their own choices and fend for themselves - until then you've got to protect them.

Don't get lax - you can't wear out - parents need to rise to the challenge. Don't grow weary in well-doing!

Parents need to *hold on* to their kids and *protect* them as long as necessary - but parents should also **look at** their kids and see in them their **potential**.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, **because they saw he was a beautiful child...**” They saw beauty in Moses.

According to the historian, Josephus, Amram was a man of prayer. He'd been interceding for his people, asking God for someone to deliver Israel from slavery.

One night, Amram had a vision. The Lord promised him a son to deliver the Hebrews. God said of the boy, **“His memory shall be famous while the world lasts...”**

We're told once the excited dad awoke, Amram communicated the vision to his wife, Jochebed.

The couple had clues of their child's destiny before he was born. And upon his birth nothing caused them to doubt God's promise. Moses was a beautiful baby.

Actually, Josephus tells us, Moses was so handsome as an infant, that later when he was moved into the court of the Pharaoh, people would go out of their way to walk by the nursery just to admire his good looks!

My parents had the same problem - *with my brother!*

When her baby was born Jochebed saw that he was beautiful. There was something about Moses that affirmed all the predictions and visions were true.

Moses did have a special, God-ordained destiny.

And Jochebed was a good mom. She saw her child's quality and potential. Good moms *believe in God* - and *believe in their kids*. They sense and see a beauty and a value. God sensitizes them to His eternal purposes.

A good mom recognizes her child's uniqueness.

When my kids were small, I would walk into their room and just watch them sleep. At times Kathy and I would do this together - and we'd dream of *where their little feet would walk* - *what their little hands would do*.

And we'd rededicate them all over again to God.

Even when they got into High School, sometimes I'd watch them sleep (*provided I could stay up late enough*) and I'd think similar thoughts. A good parent never stops dreaming for and believing in their child.

Once, 5 year-old "*Heather*" was being scolded by her mom, "*Heather, why can't you be as well behaved as Stacy next door?*" Heather protested, "Mom, I'll never be as good as Stacy - she's a doctor's kid."

Mom replied, "*Now what does that have to do with anything?*" Little Heather answered, "*Everyone knows the doctor always keeps the best babies for himself.*"

That's exactly how a good mom feels about her kids.

She's not blind to their flaws - she disciplines their rebellion - but she never loses sight of the beautiful in her kids. No matter how wayward they become a good mom never loses sight of their value and potential.

John Ashcroft was a former US Attorney General. And he credits his success to the prayers of his dad.

As a small boy, Ashcroft would wake up - not to the rooster crowing or to the smell of brewing coffee - but to his father's prayer. Often he would join his dad.

He'd curl up under his dad's giant frame. He recalls, "I was shielded by his body as he pleaded for my soul."

Ashcroft says he never heard his dad pray for his son's happiness - or for a bigger house, or car, or bank account. Ashcroft recalls, "He prayed that our hearts would be ignited and inspired to do things of eternal consequence." He quotes his dad's petition, "Lord, turn our eyes from the temporal, the physical, the menial - and toward the eternal, the spiritual, the noble..."

Ashcroft sums up his father's influence on his family, "My father never pressured us toward achievement. He simply dangled before us the possibilities. Thanks to his example, we sometimes took the bait." *Parents, are you dangling noble possibilities before your children?*

Once, a dad tells of the time when he was painting the laundry room with his 10 year old son. *The dad had the brush while the son had the roller.* And every time the boy left the room, the father would grab the roller and re-roll wherever his son had shabbily painted. *Dad watched the boy stretch for places he couldn't reach.*

In fact, he was afraid his son would step in the paint, or spill it on the floor. When he saw him stretch in vain again, he

shouted, "I told you to stop stretching! I'll get that." The boy replied, "*Ok, Dad, I won't do it again.*"

Later the father said, "In the silence that followed, I wondered how many times I'd given my son the message: "*Stop stretching. You can't. It's too hard. Let me do it. Don't reach so high!*" I was spouting my own fears. I look back now and hope my son didn't listen!"

It's terrible when a parent's own fears hold back their child. *If your parent doesn't believe in you, who will?*

How it must've scarred a young George Washington after he'd wasted his allowance. His mom rebuked him, "Oh George, you never did have a head for money."

Can you imagine the trauma Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph, endured when his mom scolded him, "Sam, stop tapping your fingers, it's driving me crazy."

Or imagine future astronaut, Neil Armstrong, after his mother commented, "Neil, you have no more business taking flying lessons than the man on the moon." *It's sad when a parent discourages their child's potential.*

Once, the mother of a little boy on our Little League team took her son home before the game was over.

I realized the kid was coming to bat that inning, and if he left early, it would cost our team an automatic out. I asked his mom, "Why, don't you let Billy hit? If he doesn't come to bat, the team will have to take an out."

And right there in front of a grandstand full of people this mom shouts, "Aw, he's no good. He'd make an out anyway. We've gotta go!" What an awful thing to do.

A good parent never undermines his child's potential. He or she sees and supports the beauty in their child.

Amram and Jochebed **held on** to Moses, and provided him **protection**... They **looked at** their child, and admired his **potential**... And finally, these parents **let go** of their child and **trusted in God's providence**.

Jochebed was a mom who believed God was more concerned about her child's future than she was!

She trusted God to be committed to her son. *A good mom believes she's not alone in the rearing of her kids.*

Understand the word **"providence"**...

It's God's overarching intervention in human affairs. It's *His involvement* in and behind *our circumstances*.

Providence is God's means of accomplishing His purposes through events beyond our control.

And there comes a point with every parent, where they are no longer in control of *where their child goes*, and *what their child does*, and *who their child is with*...

In those moments, a parent has to trust in God's love for their child and in His overarching providence.

Commentator John Darby sums up the idea of God's providence, **"God's ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes that He is behind."** Jochebed trusted God to move behind the scenes in Moses' life.

Exodus 2:3 tells us what this mother did, **"When she could no longer hide (Moses), she took an ark of bulrushes for him,**

daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him." Jochebed waterproofed a basket.

She created a floating bassinet for her son, Moses, and laid him on what had been a watery grave for so many of the Hebrew infants. Jochebed launched the basket downstream... into the flow of undertows and toward the mouths of underfed hungry crocodiles...

Yet, she was a mom who trusted God to control the current, and bring her precious boy to safety. She **let go** of her son and placed him into God's loving arms.

This is what Tracinda Foxe did in December, 2005...

When her third story apartment caught fire Tracinda's one month-old infant began to choke on the billowing, black smoke. She held her son out of the window for as long as she could. But her arms gave way and she had to turn her baby loose. The baby fell three floors *but God's providence finishes the story...*

A New York Housing employee named Felix Vazquez saw the situation and moved into position to catch the child. *It just so happens*, Felix is a catcher on a local baseball team. And since he'd also been a lifeguard, after he caught the baby, he applied mouth-to-mouth resuscitation... His measures saved the baby's life.

Obviously, Felix Vazquez was hailed a hero. But in a sense it wasn't Felix that saved the child, as much as it was a mom's decision to trust in God's providence and **let go**... After Tracinda was rescued she commented on her horrifying

ordeal, “I prayed that someone would catch him. I said, “God, please save my son.”

If Tracinda had held on to her baby for too long, he would've suffocated. And figuratively speaking, this is the mistake many Christian parents make. They hold on for too long. A child can be *smothered by a mother*.

As I said earlier, parents need to hold on to their kids when they're young and provide them protection - but there comes a point when a parent has to **let go...**

My kids had to learn to stand on their own two feet -and think and believe independently from their parents.

If I shelter them completely, they'll never learn to make it in an anti-Christ world. I want to teach my kids to live out their faith under real world circumstances.

Hey, I believe in keeping the reins tight - but I also believe in turning loose of those reins a little at a time.

Kids need to be exposed to the world in *small doses*.

This is why I always loved the ballpark... My kids played various sports and were subjected to enough *fussing* and *cussing* and *rustling* that future encounters with similar behavior didn't *intimidate* or *shock* them.

Think of a child who's learning to swim.

At first, you outfit him with water wings. *The inflatables keep his head above the surface so he can get accustom to the buoyancy of the pool. But if you never lose the water wings, he'll never start to swim.*

Sure it's risky when you take off the wings - and the child has to be monitored. The chances are he's going to struggle. But this is how you learn to stay afloat.

And likewise, your kids will never learn to swim in this world if you keep them totally shielded. *A mom has to let go at some point... A dad has to turn loose...*

Pastor Tim Kimmel gives this advice to Christian parents, "You may not want to hear this, but raising safe, Christian kids is a spiritual disaster in the making.

Your effort will produce shallow faith and wimpy believers. Kids raised in an environment that stresses safety (above all else) are on track to be pushovers.

They tend to end up either overly critical of the world system to the point where they won't have anything to do with people... an idea that comes directly from Satan's playbook. Or, they'll become naïve about the world system, which ultimately makes them putty in Satan's hands. He chews them up... Few of these kids are ready to have a spiritual impact on a wicked world."

It's ironic, but if *safety* is the sole priority of your parenting it could prove to be *dangerous* to your child.

The initial impulse of a caring parent might be to make life as *easy* as possible for their child - but trust me, that's not the best long term strategy. When it comes to what kids need - **easy isn't always better.**

Life can be hard, and parents won't always be there to shelter a child. That's why from the day a child is born a parent should begin the process of **letting go.**

Letting go can be risky. Imagine, the risk Jochebed took when she laid baby Moses in the basket and pushed him out onto the river. A mother doesn't control the current, but she believes in the God who does.

Jochebed believed God was downstream in her son's life - moving scenes - and positioning props - and organizing people to accomplish His purposes in him.

A parent moves with *confidence* when the mom or dad trusts in God's *providence*.

Listen to how God steered Moses and his basket...

Exodus 2:5, "Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him."

What an amazing work of God's providence.

Moses gets adopted by the pharaoh's daughter. He goes from *Egypt's most wanted* to a *member of the royal family*. Moses will grow up on Pharaoh's dime.

And because Jochebed believed God enough to **let go** of her son - she stayed in the picture. Pharaoh's daughter pays her wages to nurse her Moses. Moms, imagine getting a salary to breast-feed your own baby!

And since children in ancient Egypt were nursed for several years this also gave Jochebed the opportunity she had prayed for to teach God's truth to her son. God honored Jochebed's faith in letting go of her son.

In closing, there are many characteristics that make a good parent - *love, patience, consistency, firmness, tenderness, creativity* - but now that my kids are grown I'm convinced the number one ingredient is **faith**.

"By faith" Amram and Jochebed raised Moses.

And to be a good parent today, *it still takes faith*.

Faith enough to **hold on** to your child and **protect** them...
Faith enough to **look at** your child and see their potential...
And faith enough to **let go** of your child and turn them over to God's **providence**.

The request the disciples made of Jesus should be the prayer of every parent, **"Increase our faith!"**

As parents, let's raise our kids **by faith**.