

Women in the Period of the Exodus

Memory Verse: *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him* (Heb. 11:6 NIV).

Background Helps:

From last week's lesson on Rachel and Leah to this week's on women in the period of the Exodus we have skipped ahead about 400 years. The lesson itself will cover the period from just prior to the birth of Moses (Ex. 1) to Israel's conquest of Jericho under Joshua (Josh. 6), an additional time span of about 125 years. Remember to use your Bible timeline. We will consider a number of different women:

- Shiphrah and Puah, two Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1)
- Jochebed, the mother of Moses (Ex. 2:1-10; 6:20; Num. 26:59; Heb. 11:23)
- Miriam, the sister of Moses (Ex. 2:1-10; 15:19-21; Numb. 12:1-16; 20:1; Deut. 24:8-9; Micah 6:4)
- Zipporah, the wife of Moses (Ex. 2:11-22; 4:24-26; 18:1-8; Num. 12:1)
- Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho (Josh. 2; 6; Matt. 1:5; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25-26).

Notice that two of these women, Jochebed and Rahab, are among the heroes of faith celebrated in Hebrews 11.

Lesson Helps:

In a lesson with multiple characters such as this one, you have two different approaches that are possible: (1) focus on just one the characters, such as Jochebed, Miriam, or Rahab; or (2) combine two or more characters under a common theme, such as the Hebrew midwives and Rahab, or Jochebed and Rahab.

Let's begin with the second approach.

1. My aim is to teach my students about the civil disobedience of the Hebrew midwives and Rahab, so that they will choose to obey God rather than man in situations of clear conflict between God's authority and man's authority. Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives, disobeyed the Pharaoh's order to kill the newborn male infants of Israel because they "feared God" (Ex. 1:17). Similarly, Rahab hid the two spies of Israel from the king of Jericho because she had come to believe that "the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Josh. 2:11). In each case, these brave women chose to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:19). (You may want to focus your entire lesson around this theme verse.) Consider these questions: What is the general rule guiding Christians in their relationship to human authorities? (See such passages as Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, and Ephesians 5:22-6:4.) Why were the cases of the Hebrew midwives and Rahab legitimate exceptions to this general rule? What are some cases today when Christians might find it necessary to "obey God rather than men?" Teachers have the option, especially in younger classes, to

choose one of these two stories as the basis for their lesson, following the same aim.

2. My aim is to teach my students about the faith of Jochebed and Rahab, so that they will courageously trust God in perilous times. This aim capitalizes on the fact that both Jochebed (or more precisely, Moses' parents) and Rahab are included in faith's "hall of fame" in Hebrews 11 (vv. 23 and 31). Make a study of their faith, the perilous times in which they exercised it, how they demonstrated it, and how it was rewarded. Include the memory verse, Hebrews 11:6, as part of your study. Once again, the teacher has the option of choosing one of these heroes of faith as the basis of your lesson, following the same aim.

Methods: There are several exciting stories in this week's lesson (e.g., Ex. 1; 2:1-10; Josh. 2 and 6), well-fitted for the method of story-telling. See the attached sheet.

Assignment:

 Read about women in the days of the Judges (Prominent Women of the Bible).

 Memorize Proverbs 31:10.

Storytelling¹

Storytelling is one of the most effective teaching methods, for children and adults alike. It is true: Everybody loves a story. But good storytelling is an art that follows some time-tested principles. How can you tell a good story? Here are some suggestions:

- Use picturesque, vivid, descriptive, dramatic language.
- Use dialogue between the characters.
- Leave out extraneous details (but sometimes details that seem extraneous at the beginning of a story turn out to be important later on). Be as concise as possible.
- Make sure the story is clearly and logically presented in a manner appropriate to the age level of your audience.
- Arouse interest at the beginning of the story.
- Use questions from time to time to hold the attention of your audience.
- Use visual aids, if appropriate.
- Make sure your story has a point and conveys that point to the audience.
- *Above all, do not merely report the story, but relive the story by dramatic use of both voice and body.* (To achieve this effect, the teacher must know the story thoroughly and enter into the plot through the use of imagination.)
- Use the basic narrative plan as portrayed in the following diagram:

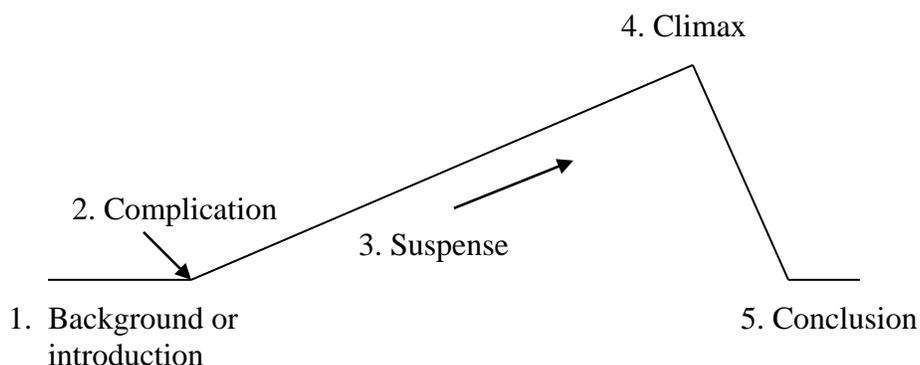


Fig. 6

There are five elements to the basic narrative plan: (1) the background or introductory material; (2) the introduction of some complication or problem; (3) suspense which builds through new complications, failures to solve the original problem, or new insights into the problem; (4) a climax or solution to the problem or problems; and (5) if necessary, a brief conclusion. The teacher is advised to read through the story of Esther in the Bible to see an example of masterful use of this narrative plan and a truly great story.

¹ Jay Adams, *Pulpit Speech* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 21-40.