



## **DISCIPLING THE NEXT GENERATION**

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Moses was born at a time of crisis and bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt. Long before then, Jacob, his fore-father migrated to Egypt with his household on the invitation of Joseph his son and subsequently settled there. Joseph had earlier on interpreted king Pharaoh's dreams and predicted the seven years of abundance and seven years of famine. Pharaoh made him the Prime Minister to manage his store houses and public affairs in Egypt. However, after several generations a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. The ruling Pharaoh felt threatened by the large and ever increasing population of the Israelites and so decreed an infanticide of Jewish baby boys from two years down. Several Jewish baby boys were killed but God miraculously preserved Moses.

Moses' mother could no longer hide him after a while because of the boy's growing stature and voice. So she dropped him beside the river in a water-proofed basket with Miriam his big sister watching close by. God's providence brought Pharaoh's daughter to the river that time to bathe and she discovered the crying baby. She knew quite rightly he was a Jewish baby and could have killed him but resolved instead to adopt him. Miriam offered to help fetch a Jewish nurse for the baby and called their mother whom the Princess commissioned to nurse the child for her. Thus, Moses was raised by his mother at the expense of the Egyptian monarch. Though a Jew, he grew up as a Prince in Pharaoh's palace with dual citizenship and privileges.

By the circumstances surrounding his birth Moses' parents could neither announce his birth nor organize an elaborate naming ceremony as is customary on the eighth day or any day at all. Even his name – 'Moses' was not given by his biological parents but by Pharaoh's daughter after a long time when the mother handed him over to the Princess. That name – "Moses" means "drawn out of water" for that was the Princess' testimony. It was a well guarded secret that Jochebed, the nurse was also Moses' real mother. It could mean death for the little boy then if that secret was known in Pharaoh's palace. However, with these secrecy and life and death circumstances, Jochebed successfully taught her son his true identity as a Jew and not an Egyptian. She taught him the word and fear of God also and prepared him for divine service later as the great law giver.

We should appreciate Moses' conflicts and identity crisis as he grew. Moses confronted the issue to sort out his conflicts the day he saw an Egyptian maltreating a Jew. He had many options. He could support the Egyptian against the Jew, the Jew against the Egyptian or simply ignore both of them and walk away. Either of the actions had great implications too. Unlike many carnal and worldly Christians today, Moses knew there and then that the die was cast and he could no longer hide or be indifferent, being neither here nor there. Like Joshua challenged the children of Israel, he had to choose that day whom he would serve - Ra, the Egyptian sun god or Jehovah, the God of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ warns us believers that we cannot serve God and mammon together. We are either loyal to one or the other. Yet many still gamble with life trying to get the most of two opposing worlds. The Jewish nature in Moses came up that day and moment so he helped his Jewish brother to kill the Egyptian adversary. He decided once and for all to identify and suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a while in the palace of Pharaoh. He preferred God's future reward to Satan's immediate gratification of the flesh. What's your choice?

Jochebed must have done a good job in raising Moses. Whereas many parents now complain in soliloquy that, "Only God knows the type of children he sends into the world nowadays" the Bible declares emphatically that all God's gifts are good and perfect (James 1: 17). Children are God's gifts no doubts (Psalm 127: 3). They are born pure and perfect too. The promise of God concerning child-raising is still valid that, "**Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it**"

(Proverbs 22: 6). If we are faithful as parents to do our portion of the work, God much more is faithful to his promise and will ensure that they do not turn away from those teachings when we are dead and no more. This is the only way to propagate our faith and ensure our children continue from where we stop to serve God in their own generation. It is the only way we can disciple future generations for God!

The Bible commands us to teach our children the word of God and even shows us how to go about it in Deuteronomy 6: 6-9. ***“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”*** We are commanded to teach them when we sit at home, when we walk on the streets and even when we lie down or rise up. Apart from teaching with our mouth, we are instructed to use our eyes, hands, our gates, door posts and every available material as a visual aids or object lessons to pass across our message and drive home the point. If we properly bring up our children in the ways and word of God, they will definitely not depart from it long after we’re dead and gone. That way, we would disciple and bequeath good Christian heritage to the coming generations.

Every child is born innocent and capable of speaking just any language. Ultimately, children speak the language parents teach them. That is the root of the expression – *‘mother tongue.’* Christian children should not speak the language of the world or Satan! Many Christian parents are negligent and failing in this all-important, God-given duty of child-raising and training yet they are quick to point accusing finger at God and complain like Adam that what He has given is hurting them. This is not true and the excuse is not tenable. Many parents are like Martha who neglected the word of God to serve tables. Parents who emphasize big and elaborate naming ceremony parties, expensive toys and designer clothes for children as well as send them to very expensive, high-brow schools often neglect this very crucial aspects of good home training, sound knowledge of the word and fear of God. Many parents have even forgotten the difference between home and school training. Generally when a child misbehaves outside, he is said to lack home training (not school training). The school cannot take over your role as parent to teach your children certain basic values, virtues and

etiquettes of life. The school cannot teach your children the fear of God – the greatest of all virtues!

Let us learn from the Rechabites in Jeremiah. Their father taught them not to drink wine while alive and yet they continued to obey his commandment long after his death. God commended them and challenged the nation of Israel to emulate them. There is an assurance from God that your children will take to training if you dare give them. Let us learn from the Eli, the Priest at Shiloh also. He failed to train his children properly and teach them the fear of God. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas became wayward, corrupt and provoked God. God ensured Eli and his sons died same day to put an end to their priesthood and lineage. Surely, we are responsible to God for the proper parenting and upbringing of our children. No excuse will do. If God did not spare Eli, He won't spare us either. Let us therefore labour not just to provide the financial, material, educational and social needs of our children but much more their spiritual needs.

Rapid advancements of science and technology, the drift towards globalization and secularism, emergence of cultic religious groups and widespread evil in the world have combined to put pressure on contemporary life and made Christian parenting and discipleship more and more difficult. This way, gradually, many Christian nations in Europe that once sent missionaries to evangelize Africa have now lost their faith. We must avoid such ugly re-occurrence in this part of the world as we work hard to ensure we pass on our faith to our children. Like the time of Moses, there are now ungodly legislations in many parts of the world taking away the rights of child training and discipline from parents and giving them instead to the States and Schools. The Christian parent therefore must be resolute and undauntedly so. We must rise up to the challenges of our time and wrestle our children out of the stranglehold of the enemy. If Jochebed could succeed in spite of her constraints and limitations, we should do much more with our so called liberties now before it's too late. We must rise up as Christian parents to resist the Pharaohs of our time who want to take our children from us and the living God to turn them to the strange gods of this world to corrupt them. Churches must give more priority attention to their children departments also and not just pay lip service to children evangelism. We owe God the duty to disciple our children and ensure that we hand over the baton or torch of our faith to future generations.