

multiplication able

exodus 1

Find your way over to Exodus chapter 1. That's where we're headed next.

When God made Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, the very first recorded directive He gave them was, "Be fruitful and multiply."

In the New Testament, as Jesus was explaining to His disciples how they were to live their lives, He gave them an overarching command to go out and make disciples, to spiritually multiply. And He said in John 15, verse 16:

John 15.16 - I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

God cares about fruit in our lives and He cares about our spiritual multiplication. That means we need to care about those things too.

Exodus is the story of God bringing His people out of Egypt after 400 years of slavery and bondage. He hears their cry and He powerfully rescues them. Now, in our way of thinking, we would expect that God would take them out of those bounds and give them complete freedom and comfort, but that's not at all what He does. Once the Lord brings the people out, He starts explaining to them His own boundaries for their lives. There's a direction He gives them.

The difference between the bindings of Egypt and the boundaries of God is that God's intention is not to stifle His people, but, as He did with Adam and Eve, He gives His own boundaries so that His people can be fruitful and multiply even more. God's intention is to tend our lives, like a garden, not let it grow wild and haphazardly.

The problem God's people run into is that sometimes we buy into the same old lie that was told all the way back in the Garden of Eden, that God's plan and boundaries really are the chains and all that matters is our freedom and our pleasure. We start thinking that our comfort, our excitement, our felt needs are what our lives are really all about and that any directive from God that might put a limit on my pursuit of pleasure is a terrible, stifling chain that should be ignored.

In actuality, God comes along and shows that He wants more for us. From the beginning He's wanted great spiritual fruit and multiplication for us. And so He directs us and prunes us and trains us so that we can have seriously abundant, lasting fruit. But in order to do all of that, He's got to transplant us. He's got to untangle us from the world and get us into the place where we need to be planted.

So, let's start the story and see how the Lord did this with the Children of Israel, several thousand years ago and especially notice the focus on multiplication in these verses.

Exodus 1.1-5 - Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already).

Back in Genesis God had explained to Abraham exactly what He was going to do and what was going to go down in Egypt for his descendants.

Genesis 15.13 - Then the Lord said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years.

The Lord was totally up front about the suffering and difficulties they were going to encounter and He is with us too. He has said plainly that in this life we’re going to encounter trouble and difficulty and suffering and affliction. One reason being that, as Christians, we stick out like a sore thumb in a lost and dying world. Like I’ve said before, we’re like the only live people in a room full of zombies. The zombies don’t like to live and let live.

But we also suffer because in affliction God is able to show His great power and His great love for us.

If everything in your life is easy and comfortable and safe and secure, then there is no need for God’s power. His greatness and strength and love for His people is demonstrated when they are in need.

We don’t have to like suffering, but we should never be surprised by it. Because God has given us a heads up that it’s coming. When it does, we need to remember that the pressure and the crushing is opportunity for God to break new ground and build a new testimony in our lives.

That’s demonstrated numerically in Exodus. 70 of God’s people came into Egypt, and 2.1 million go out. Despite the affliction, God brought fruit. Look in verse 6:

Exodus 1.6-7 - And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

The land was filled with God’s people. The reminder for me there was that the Christian life is an active, growing life. It’s not a dormant life. We’re supposed to be like an active volcano. Something this is burning from within with the unquenchable fire of God. Something that demands the attention of everyone around it. We’re to impact the region around us like a volcano does. And when God pours out of us with the Gospel and by His Spirit, the landscape should be forever changed. That’s the Christian life. Something abundant and multiplied and exceedingly mighty in the Lord.

Exodus 1.8 - Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

I’m not sure who dropped the ball here, but the knowledge of what God had done for Egypt through Joseph had not been passed down.

Christians talk a lot about how our culture is shifting and become more and more anti-Christian. People know less and less about the Bible. Those things are true, but people around us aren't going to know about Jesus if we don't tell them about Him. We're the ones that are tasked with perpetuating the knowledge of the Lord.

Exodus 1.9-14 - And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.” Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage— in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

God's people multiplied in freedom and they multiplied in affliction. That's a great encouragement, because it shows us that circumstances do not matter. If you're willing to go with God, He will accomplish His desires in your life no matter what the backdrop is. There's nothing for us to be afraid of. No matter who is president, no matter how accepted or rejected we are, God will bring fruit to our lives if we love Him and obey Him. And these verses also remind us that we *can* have joy in affliction. We *can* sing praises in the dungeon. We *can* grown under pressure. Because God's power is not hampered by life's circumstances. It's like Peter walking on the water. The storm had no bearing on God's ability to do something amazing in Peter's life. It was when Peter feared the storm that he started to sink.

Now, we're not enslaved in Egypt. But from a day-to-day point of view, we see that we can still thrive as Christians when we're in an unfriendly world. Maybe your boss is a task master. Or maybe the circumstances you're facing in life *are* an incredibly heavy burden. Those pressures are real. But despite them, if you'll live the Christian life, God can make you thrive and He will multiply fruit in you.

I think what happens is that we take notice of the storm we're in or the task master we're under and it's easy to think, “I give up. If life were easier or more comfortable, then I could be more faithful and I could serve the Lord more.” But that's just not true. It's never the case in Scripture. Because God's plan is for you during the storm and during the calm.

Faithfulness is what generates fruit in our lives. And faithfulness is not related to circumstances, it's related to our nearness to God.

Exodus 1.15-19 - Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?” And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”

These ladies are bonafide heroes. They laid down their lives to save these baby boys. I've been struck recently at how many of the Biblical characters had a point in their stories where they did not count their lives dear to them, but willingly stood in the place of the condemned. Some of them lost their lives, some of them didn't. But they demonstrate that we are to lay down our lives for others. And that's a serious thought to ponder.

Now, people like to talk about the ethics of using deception to save life. There are a few different camps you can land in. To me, these ladies don't really belong in that debate because at this point in time there was no mandate not to lie. So, that's a little debate tip to tuck away for a rainy day.

Here's a thought for us from this situation with Shiprah and Puah: Satan's tactics are always the same. Before Jesus was born it was always the same thing. Kill the baby boys. Keep the Messiah from being born or growing up. Along with that he's always had the same tactic of wiping out the Israelites. Kill the people God made eternal promises to so that God fails.

In our lives he uses the same methods over and over again too. The same deception and intimidation and scare tactics that he used on Eve in the Garden of Eden are directed at you. Because if Satan can scare us or pressure us into being inactive or unfaithful in our Christianity, then the fruit production will stop, and the Gospel will stop being amplified from our lives and, effectively, we'll make the same choice Eve did - to abandon the plans of God and go some other way toward something that seems easier or more pleasurable or more comfortable.

Now, we're not usually faced with having to kill little children like these 2 Hebrew ladies were, but every day there are all kinds of direct attacks on our holiness and our confidence in the Lord and our zeal for the Kingdom. Every day there are pressures to look at things we shouldn't look at and ignore the laws, be they God's or man's, that we think don't matter. There is a constant onslaught against our Christianity.

And in those situations, we need to do what these ladies did: We need to fear God. The fear of the Lord is the answer. It is the gateway to all sorts of great stuff. Wisdom and purity and spiritual vigor. The Bible says that it's through the fear of the Lord that we avoid evil. That's what these 2 women did and the value of this decision that they made is literally incalculable, not only in their lives but in the lives of the whole Hebrew community there in Egypt.

Exodus 1.20-22 - Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

Warren Wiersbe points out that it would've been much safer for God to reward these women with *NO* children. That would've been easier. Instead, He rewarded them with the responsibility of children and established their households.

All of chapter 1 highlights that God is trying to do something very specific and very deliberate in our lives. We usually want what's easy and what feels good, but the Lord wants things that are far greater and far better.

He wants to untangle us from the bondage of sin and get us planted and growing, like a tree near rivers of water that brings forth fruit, season after season.

If we're on board with that, then it doesn't matter what our circumstances are. The Lord will provide households for us to work in and be blessed in. Now for these 2 ladies the Lord provided literal households of children.

But that word is an interesting word. Among other things, it can be translated as house or temple or family or lineage. We're not Israel, so the literal blessings we see God giving to His people in this book don't directly apply to us in the Church.

But spiritually speaking, devotionally speaking, the Lord reveals Himself to us and says, "If you fear Me, if you let Me take you out of the old life you were tied up in, then I'll provide for you a temple and a house and a lineage for you to work in and find rest in." The Lord's intention is to take our lives and multiply the fruit in us for our benefit and His good pleasure.

Here at the end of chapter 1 we see the stage is set for Moses to be born. We'll get to follow his life and see all that God did in and through him and I'm excited about that. But today, the stage is set for you and me to have our lives erupt with God's presence. So remember that we're never called to live a dormant Christianity, but an active, erupting, overflowing one.