

# Lenten Devotional 2020

Wednesday, February 26, 2020  
Ash Wednesday  
Day 1, [Exodus 1](#)

## When Good Things Go Wrong

*“the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.” (Exodus 1:7)*

Having children in Scripture, especially in the Hebrew Scriptures, is a sign of God’s blessing. The story of the exodus picks up where Genesis left off. Israel (that’s a person) and his children are gathered into the safety of Egypt by their God. There they prosper. God blesses them. So, it is very ironic that the very blessing becomes the source of curse for the people of Israel. A new king rises in Egypt that did not have a history with the first generation. This means he only sees a threat to Egypt’s power. He cannot afford to have Israel leave Egypt because they are the labour force. So, before the worst can happen he takes the situation in hand and begins to subdue them. But, this has the opposite effect. Instead, the Israelites just keep growing. A new strategy is envisioned; the male babies are to be put to death at birth. This too is thwarted by two midwives in particular. The result of their faithfulness is the lives of those children, they become established, and Israel kept growing. So, the final command is to cast every son (not male) into the Nile river (understood as a god).

In other words the Israelites are just like us. Being the people of God is not a guarantee to health and happiness. Christians get cancer, have accidents, are murdered, are victimized by oppressors, etc. In fact, because we are different by being Christians we are also targeted for standing apart from the culture (there are times when Christians create their own problems and times when Christians have done the same to others, but the point still stands). All this to say that just because we are experiencing blessings at the moment doesn’t mean that can’t change to the worst. Jesus reminds us that, “[the Father] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). So the only question left is a discipleship question: what are you going to do when hard times come?

There’s lots of ways to ask that question. Are you going to be faithful to Jesus or unfaithful? Are you going to trust God or look for other solutions? Are you going to collaborate with the powers to save your own skin or are you going to lay everything on the line to do the right thing despite what the consequences are likely to be? That is the position of these two Hebrew women. Kill children: yes or no?

Now, you are likely not in such a tough position and I hope you never are. But, I know that when crisis comes into our lives we are all tempted to circumvent the crisis by giving into the circumstances. Often we can dress it up in religious language so that we can claim it is the godly choice. But, in our heart of hearts we know it isn’t.

What is your situation today? Will you trust God in the midst of it? What is the right thing to do even when you feel all alone, like even God is not there? And, if you’re in the place of blessing and not curse how can you walk with those in crisis? How can you ease their burden or simply be present to them? These are all discipleship questions because we must allow God to do his work in us now—in the light, in the blessing—so that we are ready when difficult times come.

## Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. We pray that you would deliver us from evil and from the evil one. We pray that you would form your character in us—the character of Jesus, so that we can navigate these dark times. Help us to be like Shiphrah and Puah, able to do the right thing even at great peril to ourselves. Most of all, be present with us in our times of trouble and turn our mourning into gladness. Amen.