

Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

15/08/2021 -- Women of the Bible – Shiphrah and Puah

Loving Midwives



Welcome to this weeks thoughts
Minster Bethel is planning its return back to services at the church starting in September
Please contact any deacon re the return to church plans

All lockdown services can be found at: www.mbccs.co.uk

Who will rise up for me against the wicked?
Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?

Psalm 94:16

Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts.

Our hymn today is: "Teach me to dance!"

[Teach Me to Dance to the Beat of Your Heart \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

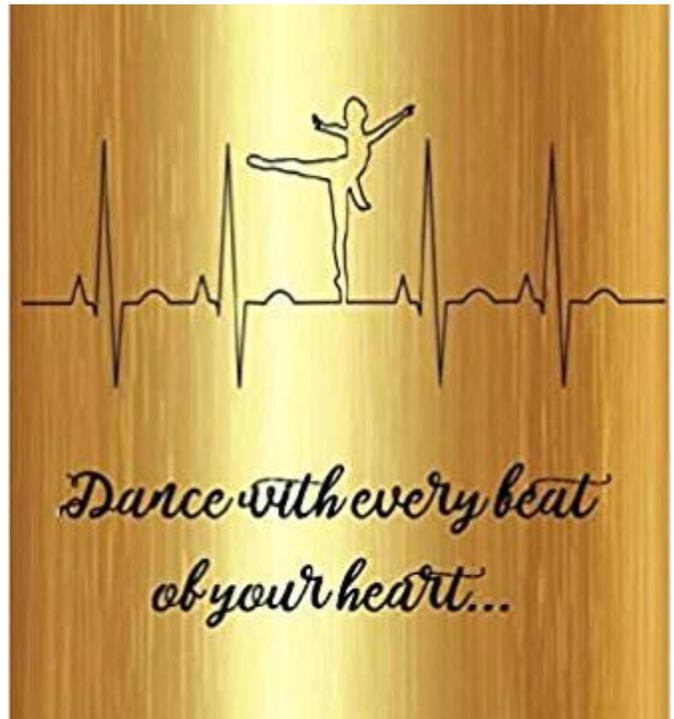
*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*

*Teach me to love with your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*

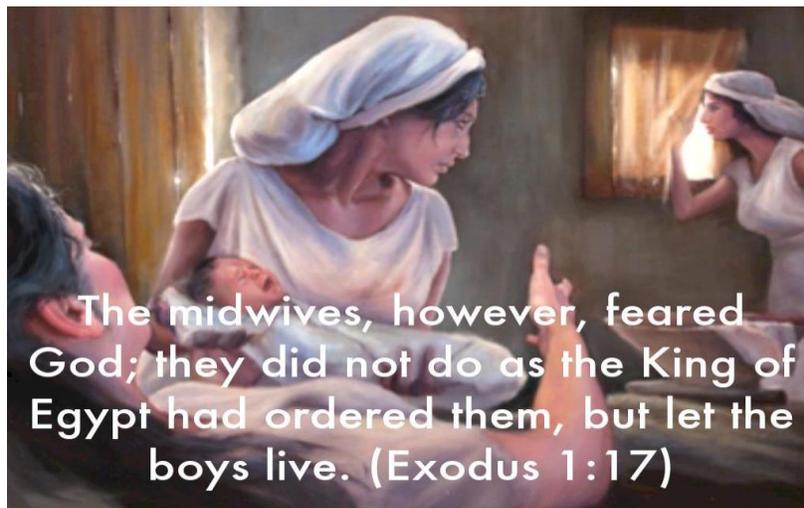
*You wrote the rhythm of life
Created heaven and earth
In You is joy without measure
So, like a child in your sight
I dance to see your delight
For I was made for your pleasure
Pleasure*

Teach me to dance....

*Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'yes'
A will that leaps to obey you
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in your face
Let my whole being praise you
Praise you*



The reading today is Exodus 1 [Exodus 1 NIVUK - The Israelites oppressed - These are - Bible Gateway](#)



Love of the Midwives

Today we are looking at two ladies of the bible, Shiphrah and Puah. These two ladies were midwives to the Hebrew women. I can picture them perfectly as members of the cast of “Call the Midwives”. They were courageous, compassionate, and bold. What happened ultimately is that they became midwives to the Hebrew people’s liberation.

To understand their story, we must first remember Joseph with the multi coloured coat. A Hebrew man who was betrayed by his own brothers who sold him as a slave. Joseph ended up in a foreign land – Egypt. Things could have been really bad for him, but Joseph found favour with the king because he was faithful and brilliant, and because the king recognized his value in spite of being a Hebrew.

As the years went on, Joseph gained stature and influence, and consequently, his family and the Hebrew people were able to flourish in Egypt – in spite of being strangers in a strange land.

But inevitably, things changed. Joseph and his brother and that generation died. The king who had valued Joseph so much also died. *There was a new king.*

This new king had not known Joseph nor appreciated his important role in Egypt’s history. Instead this new king felt threatened by the Hebrew immigrants. His fear turned into hate.

He forced the Hebrew men into hard labour. He constructed systems of oppression to keep them down, yet still they flourished and his fear of them grew stronger.

So he devised a plot of extermination that would remove the threat once for all.

He ordered the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill every Hebrew baby boy that they delivered from that day forward. However, Shiphrah and Puah feared God more than the King. They chose a higher authority. They chose *love*.

Shiphrah and Puah defied the king’s command. At great risk for their own lives, they let every baby live.

Their love literally allowed for life to happen.

It didn’t take long for the king to notice all the little Hebrew baby boys crawling around his kingdom, and he demanded an explanation. Playing right into his prejudice, Shiphrah and Puah were quick to reply: “Oh these Hebrew women are not so refined as Egyptian women, they are vigorous – like animals – and give birth before we can even get to them!”

That was plausible to the king and he accepted their explanation.

With the failure of that approach, Pharaoh came up with Plan B. It was even worse.

If the midwives could not catch the Hebrew babies at birth, then every Hebrew baby boy would simply have to be killed.

This horrendous policy decision was met with a chain of resistance, a subversive movement inspired by Shiphrah and Puah to protect these vulnerable innocent babies.

We know of one Hebrew woman in particular, who put her newborn baby boy in a basket and hid him in the bulrushes in the river. Moses.

The king’s own daughter found little baby Moses, and her heart was filled with compassion for him. She took him home with her, so the loving defiance that was started by Shiphrah and Puah, now had come into Pharaoh’s own household. His daughter hired a wet nurse to feed Moses – a wet nurse who turned out to be none other than his own mother.

As we know, that little baby survived and as an adult, he led his people out of Egypt, out of bondage, into freedom.

Because Shiphrah and Puah's small act of loving defiance was the catalyst for a movement to protect the Hebrew baby boys, they can be credited as the midwives of the Hebrew people's freedom from bondage and oppression.

Today we can still learn from Shiphrah and Puah.

We are still subject to God's power – which is **love** – above any other power. Is love the organizing principle and motivator for all that we do? Or is it status, success, fear, money, security, revenge, or anything less than love?

No matter how small our circle of influence may be, each choice we make matters. It is natural to feel powerless especially during the last year with COVID all around. Every time we choose love over evil (in our own circles of influence) it makes a difference. We must never underestimate that.

Shiphrah and Puah's impact was disproportionate to their humble role. At the time Shiphrah and Puah could not have predicted the ripple effect of their choice of love and their decision to defy the king's evil command. They made their decisions one baby at a time. Their loving efforts, however, led to the liberation of God's people from oppression and injustice.

We may not be able to see the big picture, however we can have confidence that our actions – when based on love – are part of something much greater than ourselves.

Every time we choose love over evil, especially on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized in our own day, we help to bring about the Kingdom of God.

May we be inspired by the story of Shiphrah and Puah to say "yes" to love, with courage, compassion, and boldness with every opportunity that comes our way.

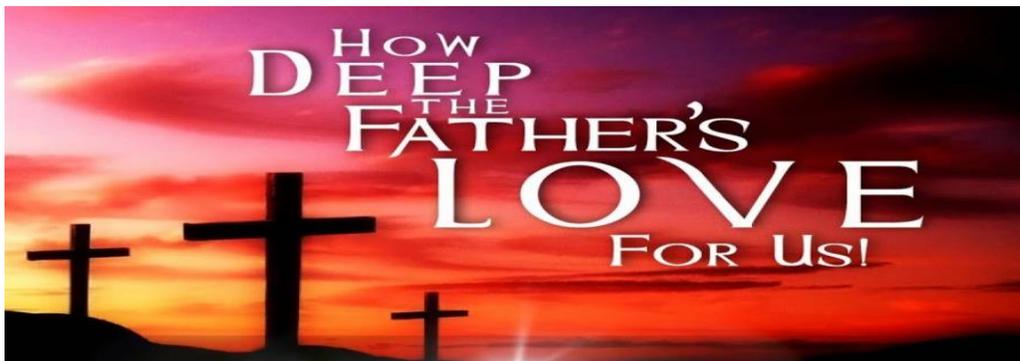
Our Second Hymn is "How deep the Father's love for us"

[How deep the Father's love Fernando Ortega - YouTube](#)

*How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss –
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.*

*Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.*

*I will not boast in anything, No gifts,
no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.*



Today's Pray:

Dear Lord.

Please help us to love, with courage, compassion, and boldness with every opportunity that comes our way.

Amen.



Shiphrah and Puah, The Midwives

J L H X O U V X N V P A V B U B U S Y D C N M K
 B H L Z Y D D W C P I M E N O B U R G B N G L Y
 X C S L B F Y Q I W A A E S D F E J E H R E T R
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 J H H C Q K A F Z X P Y T Q V H O H Z F L Y G Q
 P D V H C M Z W N N S A S J K X X Q C L L U E X
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 S E T I L E A R S I L G V K M C B I R S S U T S
 O W I B I X N L V K I Q P I T H O M F J D Z X W
 J V Z G L V I D Z E B K T G F M A F T W S E R B

REFUSED	GOD	FEARED	KILL
HEBREW	MORTAR	BRICKS	ISRAELITES
KING	RAMESES	PITHOM	SLAVES
EGYPTIANS	THREAT	MULTIPLIED	PUAH
SHIPRAH			

