




THE COMMUNITY

Moses | RELUCTANT LEADER

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Exodus 2-4

Exodus 2:11-25

However vague his understanding of the concept, it's clear from his actions that Moses, well before the burning bush, saw himself in the role of Israel's deliverer. However it's very difficult to lead when no one is following, and the Jews were clearly not falling into line behind Moses. The response of one of the Hebrew slaves really says it all, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" This might have been better translated, "Who died and made you boss?"

We are not told in the passage whether his actions lacked God's direction or timing or whether the Jews were simply unresponsive, but Acts 7:23-26 seems to indicate the latter. In Stephen's speech to the Jewish leaders in Acts 7, he cites the rejection of Moses' leadership as an example of the long history of Israel's unbelief. As Stephen explains it, the Jewish response to Moses was identical to their response to Jesus who, likewise, came to save His people and was neither recognized nor regarded as the nation's deliverer. A good point – a really good point.

Well, the result of Moses' actions – murder to be precise – is that he finds himself a fugitive from Egypt in the land of Midian where he assumes the life of a shepherd for the next forty years. His forty years in exile give him ample opportunity to identify with the people he will lead. They have been exiled themselves for the last 400 years outside of their homeland, mother Israel.

Exodus 3:1-10

This should be a very familiar story. After forty long years, God appears to Moses from a burning bush and commissions him to lead the Jews into the Promised Land. Contrary to popular thinking, a burning bush in the desert is not uncommon. What is miraculous is that the bush is not consumed. The bush seems to be a picture of Moses: humanly speaking, he was nothing but a frail tumbleweed tottering around the desert. But invested with God's strength and power, he would manifest the very presence of God to His people as well as His enemies.

Exodus 3:11-12

Apparently his earlier failure and forty years in the desert have drained Moses of

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What's the Big Idea?

Character Series: The main intent of these character studies is to help your group become more familiar with the entire Bible and to see how the Old Testament connects to the New, telling one complete story of redemption which reaches its climax in Christ.

This Study: This study focuses on Moses' leadership. Most leaders experience fear, self-doubt and insecurity. But in any responsibility, role or task, God can be our sufficiency. We must choose to trust Him and choose to step out in faith.

What's the Problem?

As broken people, we carry our fears, insecurities and inadequacies into everything we do, including leadership. This is compounded when we seek to compensate, cope and cover-up with these weaknesses apart from God.

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his confidence and motivation, not to mention electrolytes. In his dialogue with God, Moses is stubbornly reluctant to assume the task God has called him to, insisting he is unqualified. An understandable response given his age, his history and the sheer enormity of the task. God comforts Moses, telling him that he has all the qualifications he will ever need: God will be with him, like the bush in the wilderness, burning with God's power yet never consumed.

Exodus 3:13-21

Perhaps emotionally scarred by rejection from his first rescue attempt, the Exodus dress-rehearsal of forty years earlier, Moses asks what authority he will have this time around that will cause the people to listen to him. He is told to tell the Jews that "I Am" has sent him, and God promises to give him favor in the eyes of the people – God Himself will be the one to convince them to listen. While Moses clearly prefigures Jesus in his role as Israel's deliverer, this passage marks the very clear distinction between Moses the deliverer and Jesus our ultimate Deliverer. When asked to give proof of his authority, Moses was to say that "I Am"(God) had sent him. When Jesus is asked to give proof of his authority, he responds, "before Abraham was born, I am!"(John 8:58). In other words, Jesus is saying, "I Am God!" There is a big difference between saying "God sent me," and "I am God."

Exodus 4:1-9

But Moses is still concerned that the people won't listen to him – that or he's still looking for a loophole to get out of going. So God gives him a very practical way in which he will give Moses favor in the eyes of the people. He will invest Moses with the power to perform miraculous signs; God will actually display His mighty power through the hand of Moses.

Exodus 4:11-17

While I think few people would have been as openly pessimistic in a face-to-face encounter with God, I think anyone could identify with Moses' fears and insecurities. Yet, through all of his reluctance and hesitancy, God is patient, comforting and consoling. He tells Moses that He will be with him, that He will give Moses favor in the people's eyes and that He will give him the ability to perform mighty signs that will command the response of the people. What more can God possibly do? The answer is nothing. It's time for Moses to do something; it's time for him to step up, accept the responsibility and lead. Moses does respond...with a refusal. And it's this outright disobedience that arouses anger from the Lord. God understands our human frailty, fears, insecurities and past failures. He gets it. He gets all of it. And He desires to help us in every possible way except one: He will not do it for us. He will also not tolerate disobedience or handing in our resignation. And yet even here, even after all of this, God is willing to make one more concession to Moses' fear. He allows Moses to take Aaron along for support and to compensate for his is lacking.

Conclusion

In Hebrews 3:2 it says that "Moses was faithful" as a steward of God's house, and the scriptures are replete with commendations of Moses leadership. In many ways it's inspiring to see how this great leader began with insecurities, self-doubt and perhaps even cowardice. Yet God transformed him into a great leader. This story of Moses carries three encouragements. One is that it's entirely understandable to be fearful in ministry, especially in stepping into positions of leadership and responsibility. Second, God can, and will, compensate for our weakness as we depend on Him. Jesus Christ, the ultimate Leader and Deliverer, will equip us for any task that He has called us to. And last, there is only one way to be unsuccessful when God calls us to step out in faith – to refuse and shrink back in unbelief.

What's Our Response?

There are three heart responses you're going after in this study.

1. You want your group to see how past failures, fears and insecurities can lead them to shrink back from leadership and from trusting God.
2. Your group needs to believe that if they are willing to step out in faith, God will go before them and provide for them in the ways they are lacking. They need to trust in His sufficiency and not be bound by their lack of self-sufficiency.
3. You want the members of your group to be wrestling with where God wants them to be serving and leading.

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What Are the Questions?

Exodus 2-4

Launch

What was the most challenging responsibility you've ever had? If you were on an island with 100 other castaways, what would be your greatest insecurity in taking on the role of "leader?"

Explore

Read Exodus 2:11-25.

1. This is well before the burning bush and God calling him to lead Israel. Why does Moses seek to lead them here?
2. Why do you think Moses' attempt to lead the Jews is unsuccessful? Why were the people unresponsive?
3. In Acts 7, Stephen makes some connections between Moses in this situation and Jesus. Before looking at it, what connections would you make between them?

With his murder of the Egyptian exposed, Moses flees Egypt and for the next 40 years he tends sheep in the Midian wilderness as a fugitive unable to return to Egypt.

4. During this time, what do you think Moses thought and felt about God, ministry, his purpose in life?
5. What do you think God was doing in Moses' life during these 40 years? What was He doing in the lives of the Jews and the Egyptians during this time?
6. Can you think of similar desert experiences (prolonged times of confusion/isolation) suffered by other biblical leaders? Have you ever had a desert experience like this?

Read Exodus 3:1-12.

7. Why does God use a burning bush to speak to Moses? What do you think is the significance?

8. Why did God wait so long to "hear" the cries of His people? How could Moses empathize with the Jews?

9. In 3:11-12, what is the source of Moses' reluctance, and how does God address it?

10. Read 3:13-21. What does Moses fear, and how does God comfort him? Of all of Moses' fears and insecurities, which can you most identify with?

Read Exodus 4:1-9.

11. It's likely Moses was effected by his failure 40 years earlier. What past failure(s) still haunt you?

12. Of all the promises that God makes to encourage and comfort Moses, which is most motivating to you?

Read 4:10-17

13. Why do you think God responds here with anger rather than comfort?

14. In what ways does Moses' role as the deliverer of God's people foreshadow and point to Christ as our ultimate Deliverer?

Apply

15. What failures or fears from your past inhibit your ability or willingness to trust God today?
16. What do your fears reveal about where you're not trusting (or willing to trust) God? By your actions/feelings what are you doubting about Christ's sufficiency?

17. What is the most difficult thing you feel God is calling you to do right now? Personally? In ministry?

18. If you stepped out in faith to lead in some area of ministry, in what ways would you be looking to God to give you favor? To provide, equip and empower you?

NOTES:

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What Are the Answers?

1. Not looking for a right answer. The text doesn't give an answer.
2. In Acts 7:23-26, Stephen says that it was because of the unbelief of the Jewish people that they didn't recognize him, the same reason they didn't recognize Jesus.
3. See answer to #2, but do look at the Acts passage.
4. Allow the group to discuss.. Confused? Bitter?
5. Obviously God was preparing Moses, but discuss in what ways He was doing so. God was also preparing the Jews, allowing them to become despairing enough to want to leave Egypt.
6. Joseph (Genesis), John the Baptist, Jesus in the wilderness. Discuss.
7. See "What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?". It may represent the frailty of Moses manifesting the power of God.
8. Perhaps for the Jews to grow to a sufficient number to people, or so that they would come to loathe enslavement enough to be willing to leave Egypt (even in their journey to Palestine many wished to return).
9. He feels inadequate. See "What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?"
10. He fears no one will believe him or follow him. See "What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?"
11. Allow the group to discuss.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. Moses, here, is simply refusing to go. God understands our fear and anxiety but not our disobedience.
14. Discuss. You want the group to see how the Old Testament points to the New, how Moses the Deliverer foreshadows Jesus our ultimate Deliverer.
15. You want the group to identify their biggest barriers to trusting God and stepping out in faith.
16. You want to make connections between our resistance to God and unbelief. What are they not seeing or experiencing of the sufficiency of Christ that would equip them to lead?
17. Share your experiences. Allow them to see what sorts of things they should be struggling with.
18. Here you want to encourage people to take specific steps to trust God and lead. You might even make some suggestions.

Memorize

Through these Old Testament character studies you want the group to memorize the names and order of the books of the Old Testament.

This week is the first eight books. The first five are written by Moses and are often referred to as the Pentateuch:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and Ruth.



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