

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH - THE LIFE OF MOSES - WEEK 3

The Discouragement

Finally, the time had come for Moses to step out in obedience to God and go to Pharaoh. He was probably nervous, yet excited to be part of God's plan to deliver the Israelites. This week we will look at the discouraging times Moses faced in the midst of obedience. As he became discouraged, he began to question his role in delivering the Israelites.

Discouragement is an inevitable part of ministry and life. We will see successes and positive results, but we will also see failures and disappointments. Sometimes those failures are a result of our own self-effort. Other times, I believe God uses them to remind us of our dependence on Him and His overall sovereignty in life. Ask God to speak to your heart as you look to His Word this week.

Day 1: Unexpected Results

Today we will look at the results of Moses' obedience to God. He did what God asked him to do, and yet, the results were less than desirable. His obedience had a negative impact on the very ones he wanted to help. God works in ways that we cannot always understand. He doesn't ask us to understand, but to trust.

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 5:1-23](#)

1. How did Pharaoh view the God of Moses (v. 2)?
2. What effect did Moses' request have on the Israelites? What does verse 9 give as a reason for Pharaoh's response?
3. Describe Moses' feelings as expressed in verses 22-23 after the foremen of the sons of Israel showed hostility toward Moses and Aaron?

Looking Deeper

How might it have helped Moses if he had remembered what God had told him in [Exodus 4:21](#)?

In [Exodus 5:3](#), what was Moses trying to communicate to Pharaoh by saying, "Let us go...lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword"?

Why would the sons of Israel "need" to go out of the land to sacrifice to God (Ex 8:25-26)?

Looking Upward

4. How have you seen obedience lead to tougher circumstances in your life or in the lives of others?
5. When do you tend to get discouraged and question God?
6. What helps you work through this period of discouragement and questioning?

Looking Reflectively

Even when our obedience leads to unexpected or negative results, we must trust that God is still in control and that this is part of His plan for us.

Is there something in your life that is difficult for you right now? Are you confused about what God is doing? Are you feeling that God has “let you down”? Take some time to be honest with Him, as Moses did, and give your feelings and thoughts to the Lord. Ask Him to give you the grace and patience to wait on Him and His timing.

Day 2: God’s Encouragement

Moses had stepped out and obeyed God, yet the results were not what he had expected. The Hebrew foremen were already criticizing and complaining about Moses. He thought God would deliver the people immediately, even though God had told him that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart. Moses, in his discouragement, went to God and poured out his heart. I can imagine their conversation. “Look. I’ve done what you told me to do. I have held up my part of the deal, but you have not kept your promise. What is going on? You said you would deliver your people, but instead they are worse off than before. Why?” I think most of us have come to that place at some point in our lives where we have questioned what God is doing. Today, we will look at God’s response to Moses. Be encouraged as you study God’s Word and see His involvement in the lives of His people.

Looking To God’s Word

[Exodus 6:1-9](#)

7. How would reminding Moses of who God is, His names, and His covenant with the people in verses 2-5 encourage Moses?
8. List the promises God made to the sons of Israel in verses 6-8.
9. How did the people’s response in verse 9 differ from their response in [Exodus 4:29-31](#)? Why did their response to God change?

Looking Upward

10. How would you describe God as He is revealed in this passage?

11. How do difficult times affect your fellowship with God and the way you listen to other Christian brothers and sisters?

12. How do you handle discouragement?

Looking Deeper

God appeared to Moses as Yahweh in [Exodus 3:14](#). He made Himself known as God Almighty (El Shaddai in Hebrew) to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 6:2-3). In the passages below, what was the situation in which God was called by His name, El Shaddai, God Almighty?

[Genesis 17:1-2](#)

[Genesis 35:9-12](#)

[Ruth 1:20-21](#)

[Job 23:8-17; 27:2](#)

Looking Reflectively

God is always faithful and true to His Word regardless of how it may seem at the time.

Don't let discouragement hinder you from obeying God. Instead, allow it to draw your focus to Him.

Are you focused on your circumstances or on Him? Thank Him for His faithfulness to you. If you doubt His faithfulness in the midst of some tough circumstances, confess your doubts and claim the truths of God's Word over your feelings. Trust Him, by faith, when you can't understand what He is doing.

Day 3: Self-Doubt

Moses had spoken to the sons of Israel to encourage them with God's words, yet the people did not listen. Think how Moses must have felt. At the end of [Exodus 5](#), we see him in the midst of discouragement and doubt. God greatly encouraged him in [Exodus 6](#), and he was probably feeling much better about the situation...until the people did not listen. As you read today, make note of the way Moses viewed himself. Did he see himself through God's eyes or his own eyes?

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 6:10-13; 28-30](#)

13. What effect did the peoples' response have on Moses?

14. What did Moses see as the problem?

15. In verse 13, what does God's response to Moses and Aaron communicate?

Skim [Exodus 6:14-27](#).

16. Where do Moses and Aaron belong in the lineage of the tribes of Israel?

[Exodus 6:14-27](#) seems to be an unnatural insertion into the narrative. However, the genealogy was placed here to identify Moses and Aaron more specifically because of the prominent position they were assuming as representatives of the people before the Egyptian state.

Looking Deeper

Look back at [Exodus 4:10-12](#). Moses had earlier brought up this "excuse" or "weakness" to the Lord. How did God respond then?

What does [Isaiah 45:9-10](#) communicate concerning our relationship with our Creator?

How should we look at our weaknesses in light of [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#)?

Looking Upward

17. How do you usually respond when you feel as if you have failed? Can you give a specific example?

18. In what ways has God encouraged you in the midst of discouragement?

Looking Reflectively

Focus on Him in the midst of discouragement, not on your own weakness.

Have you been discouraged lately? Are you feeling inadequate or that you've failed? Go before Him, and thank Him for the tough times. Thank Him for making you just the way He did, strengths and weaknesses. Ask Him to build on your strengths and work on your weaknesses.

If God has called you to a task, He will make you adequate for it.

Meditate on [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#): "Faithful is He who calls you, and He will also bring it to pass."

Moses turned his focus inward instead of keeping his focus on God. He began questioning and doubting himself. Have you ever felt like Moses, discouraged about something, but feeling better about it after spending time with God and in His Word, only

to lose heart again when things didn't unfold the way you had expected? I have. Yet, we must keep our focus on Him and not on ourselves.

Day 4: Obedience

Things had not gone smoothly for Moses. Pharaoh increased the labor of the Israelites, and they were upset with Moses, blaming him for their plight. Yet, God once again sent Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh, in the midst of Moses' self-doubt. Even though it must have been hard for him to go back to Pharaoh, Moses made a choice to obey and follow God's command once again.

Looking To God's Word

[Exodus 6:28-7:13](#)

19. How did God "convince" Moses to step out in obedience in the midst of his self-doubt?

20. What was God's ultimate purpose in hardening Pharaoh's heart (7:3, 5)?

21. What was the possible significance of Aaron's staff swallowing up the magicians' staffs in verses 11-12?

22. How old were Aaron and Moses at this time (v. 7)?

Often in the Old Testament, the age of a prominent figure is given just before a major event is to occur.

Looking Upward

23. Give an example of a time when you obeyed God even though you didn't understand His purpose.

24. What moves you to obedience? In other words, why do you obey God, even when it is difficult?

Looking Deeper

[1 Samuel 15:1-23](#)

How did Saul disobey God? How did Saul differ from Moses in his response to God?

Develop some principles on obedience from this passage.

Looking Reflectively

Obedience requires listening to God, not our feelings.

You don't have to understand what God is doing in order to be obedient to His call. God delights in our obedience.

Are you listening to God's Word or to your feelings? Are you hesitant to step out in obedience because you feel inadequate or discouraged? Spend some time with Him. Be honest with Him about your feelings. Trust Him and His leading in your life.

Is there a situation in which you are struggling with obeying God because of the difficulty of the circumstances? Are you questioning what God is doing? Do you have doubts that God can use you in light of some of your weaknesses? Take your thoughts to Him.

Day 5: A Hardened Heart

In yesterday's lesson, God told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. The hardness of his heart prevented Pharaoh from listening to God. Was Pharaoh responsible for his hardened heart, or God, or both? I admit that this is a difficult question. When it is hard for us to comprehend or understand a concept of the way God works in people, we must trust in His sovereignty and in His ultimate purpose.

Looking To God's Word

25. Today, we are going to look ahead at some verses in which Pharaoh's heart is hardened. Make note of whether God or Pharaoh hardened his heart. If it is unclear who is responsible for the hardening, put a question mark. Also, give the reason for why God hardened Pharaoh's heart if it is stated.

[Exodus 7:3](#)

[Exodus 7:13, 22](#)

[Exodus 8:15](#)

[Exodus 8:32](#)

[Exodus 9:7](#)

[Exodus 9:12](#)

[Exodus 9:34-35](#)

[Exodus 10:1](#)

[Exodus 10:20, 27](#)

Looking Upward

26. What does it mean to have a hardened heart?

27. What would be some warning signs that your heart is becoming hardened?

Looking Deeper

[Hebrews 3:13](#)

What is one cause of a hardened heart? Why would that cause a heart to become hardened?

How would you define the “deceitfulness of sin”? Can you give an example?

[Romans 9:17-18](#)

What additional information does this passage give you concerning Pharaoh and his hardened heart?

Looking Reflectively

A hardened heart prevents us from listening to God and obeying Him.

Is your heart hardened in any way to prevent you from listening to God’s prompting and believing Him? If so, confess your hardness of heart.

I have to be honest - I was in the midst of discouragement when I wrote this week’s lesson. I know what it feels like when you want to “quit” because you feel that you are not capable of doing something well. I felt like I was “living” this lesson as I was writing it. These Scriptures became heart knowledge for me, not just head knowledge. I related to Moses, as if God were telling me, “Get out there and do what I’ve called you to do. Get your eyes off yourself and focus on Me.” My prayer for you is that you would listen to God’s Word, not your feelings, if you are in the midst of discouragement. God uses these discouraging times in our lives for a reason. In my own life, they have brought me to a deeper dependence on Him.

Moses could have quit in the midst of discouragement, but he didn’t. God could have given up on Moses, but He didn’t. We will all face discouragement in life and ministry in some way. Satan would love to see us discouraged and ready to quit, but we must keep pressing on and being obedient to God’s call, regardless of how we feel.