

Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses

Lesson #15, It's OK to Get Discouraged and Cry Out to the Lord...

Text: Ex.5:22-23

In our previous lesson, we noted that those being led may not always see “the big(ger) picture, and thus can become frustrated, discouraged, and impatient when things don’t go *how* and *when* they expect, cf. v.21. This is unfortunate, but is NOT limited to those being led. Spiritual leaders are subject to the same kinds of frustrations, discouragements, and impatience. In many ways, spiritual leadership is comparable to rearing children, cf. 1Cor.4:15; Gal.4:19. It takes an abundance of fortitude, courage, and patience! There are times when, despite your best efforts, nothing seems to work and you just don’t know what to think or do. Moses felt that way too. Let’s see what we can learn from his *experience* and *example*...

- **Moses returned to the Lord, v.22a.** Though his subsequent steps and “venting” may have been misguided, Moses initial instinct and action was entirely correct! When we’re conflicted and confused, the first thing to do is always to (*re*)turn to your foundation: your faith *in* and dependence *on* God. When you’re “out of answers” and seemingly “out of options” in your efforts to rear children, what do you do? Call Mom or Dad, or Grandma or Grandpa for answers! It is the same with spiritual leadership. When we’re out of answers and options (sometimes because we tried to do it “our way”), we have to return to our *base-source* of information and sustenance. This is exactly what Moses did- albeit perhaps to *complain* rather than for *assistance*. We see this same tendency in Jesus Christ. When the struggles and hardships of spiritual leadership became “too much,” He would retreat to a “lonely place” to commune with His Father and “recharge,” cf. Matt.14:13; Mark 1:35.
- **It’s OK to cry out and ask questions of God, but be careful, v.22b.** After returning the *proper* and *only* True Source, Moses proceeds to ask a couple of questions. As is sometimes the case, his questions may be as much complaints as requests for information. However, note that he asks God: 1) “Why hast Thou brought harm to this people?” and, 2) “Why didst Thou ever send me?” He wants to know (or at least asks) about the **process**, and his **place** in it. First, he didn’t understand the *process* of there being a “cost factor” to liberty. Though Jesus clearly taught it, we still struggle with the same thing, Matt.10:34-39; Luke 14:25-35. If we’re going to be effective spiritual leaders, we must fully understand and well remember what we learned in Lesson 13- “It may get worse before it gets better.” Next, note that Moses asks about his *place* in this process- “Why did you send me?” Again, if we’re going to be effective spiritual leaders, we must help those whom we hope to guide to understand that spiritual liberty/freedom is “free” monetarily but still has significant cost factors. This IS our *place* as spiritual leaders: to *understand*, *recognize*, and *explain*. Before we move on, a word of caution is in order. Be careful to *ask* God for information rather than to *indict* His wisdom, motives, or timing. Despite what Moses implied (in his first question), God did not bring harm to the people, Pharaoh did, cf. vv.6ff, 23. And finally, Moses second question comes dangerously close- at least in my admittedly limited view, to being an indictment of God’s wisdom, which is never a good thing, cf. Rom.9:18-21.
- **Have patience and trust God’s wisdom and process, v.23.** In addition to not understanding God’s *process* or his *part* in it, Moses’ other complaint is that God wasn’t doing things on his (Moses’) timetable. I don’t know exactly how much time has elapsed between v.1 and v.23, but it was apparently more than Moses expected. God is going to answer Moses’ questions/complaints in 6:1ff, but Moses needed to *trust* God and be *patient*. Think about the interconnectedness of *patience* and *trust*. Is not impatience result from a lack of trust? But because Moses did not really understand and trust God’s *process* of obtaining liberty for His people, nor his (Moses’) *place* in this process, *impatience* resulted and gave rise to questioning complaints.

Even well equipped and good spiritual leaders get frustrated, discouraged, and sometimes cry out to God with questions and complaints. This usually happens when they/we fail to understand and trust God’s *process(es)* and/or His *timing*, and our *place* within both of these. It’s OK to become frustrated and cry out to God, but trust and patience will help you to maintain your focus, and allow you to continue to assist those in need of guidance, cf. 2Tim.2:24-26.

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Discussion Questions

1. How, or in what ways are *spiritual leadership* and *rearing children* comparable?

2. After the *foremen of the sons of Israel* “vented” to and indicted Moses, what did he do that was entirely right and proper? Why is this important?

3. Why did Jesus often retreat to a *lonely place* alone?

4. From v.22:
 - a. What two questions did Moses ask God?

 - b. What does his first question indicate that he failed to understand or remember?

 - c. What does his second question indicate that he failed to understand or remember?

 - d. Why are these things important to us as spiritual leaders today?

5. While it is OK to vent our frustrations and discouragements to God, what must we be careful to avoid while doing so?

6. What was Moses' basic *complaint* in v.23?

7. What was Moses lacking that gave rise to this complaint?

8. Please explain the relationship between *trust* and *patience*.

9. Why is it important for good spiritual leaders to have (or return to after becoming discouraged and crying out to the Lord) *trust* and *patience*?