

Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses

Lesson #17, Some Can't See the *Light at the End* for the *Darkness of the Tunnel*

Text: Ex.6:9

"Yes," I realize the text is only one verse (it's not a typo), but in terms of spiritual leadership, it highlights a BIG problem. Whether in the *home* (especially but not limited to *children*), at *work*, in the *community* (whether *virtual* or *actual*), or in the *local assembly*, "sheep" (and that's exactly what we are, cf. John 10:1-30; 1Pet.2:25) often have real difficulty looking through and past the *darkness* of the particular *tunnel* they're in to see the *light* at its end. Which is exactly why we need the leadership of *shepherds* (both *official* and *unofficial*), Mark 6:34!

Realizing *why* this need exists is key. Here are a few reasons:

- **Because they're *sheep* not *shepherds*** (at least not yet). One of the great challenges of child-rearing is simply remembering they're *children*. They do not yet possess the physical and mental acuity, nor have they had the experience(s) necessary, to be anything else! Heb.5:11-14 certainly maintains that some who persist in *childish* ways are *old enough to know* and *do better*, cf. vv.11-13, but it also emphasizes in v.14 that some level of *maturity* (*time to have grown*) and *practice* (and from it *experience*) are integral parts of *training the senses* to "*discern good and evil*." As this is true of *children*, so it is for the *spiritually immature*. There are things that they just can't yet *see* or *do* precisely because they haven't had the *time* and *experience* to "grow" into those abilities. Thus, the need for leadership!
- **Because they don't *listen*, v.9a.** Note, "*Moses spoke to thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen...*". What Moses "*spoke*" to them is important. He relayed to them what God said in vv.1-8 which contained all the information they needed to *understand* that there was "*light*" at the end of the tunnel, and proceed to it. But they *wouldn't* and *didn't listen!* Both *physical* and *spiritual* children have this tendency, especially when things aren't working out the way or in the time frame they want and expect. What are good leaders to do? Give up on them with an attitude of "Well, I told them but they wouldn't listen?" Is that what we do when *our* children won't listen? Or do we instead continue to patiently and consistently *remind*, *reinforce*, and *reassure*? That's exactly what good leaders do, cf. Heb.6:1-3; 2Pet.1:12-15; Jude 5!
- **Because of their *despondency*, v.9b.** The Hebrew word *kotser*, translated here as "*despondency*" by the NASB, includes "shortness of spirit" as a marginal note. It is defined as "shortness, impatience, anguish" (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon). Other versions render it as "*anguish of spirit*" (KJV), "*broken spirit*" (ESV), and "*discouragement*" (NIV). All of which means that they wouldn't or couldn't listen because of their attitude that stemmed from insufficient faith. But remember that they hadn't seen or heard from Moses for 40 years until recently, and hadn't previously heard from God for 400 years. This is not to excuse, but it does help explain their reaction. Moses returns, and God speaks through him, at last promising deliverance and a homeland. Things didn't proceed as or *at the pace* they desired/expected, their situation got even worse, and their immature faith couldn't sustain hope. Sound familiar? It happens often to children *at home* and *in the Lord!* Good leaders expect, are prepared, and meet it with reminders and guidance that bolsters *weak faith* into spiritually-enhanced *vision*, *courage*, and *perseverance*, cf. 1Thess.5:14; Heb.12:12-13.
- **Because of their *cruel bondage*, v.9c.** Let's not make light of or ignore the realities of their situation. They've been slaves for 400 years, and their *bondage* has gotten a lot worse recently, cf. 5:7-14. This wasn't *all in their minds* or just the result of *immature faith*. The reality of their current situation wasn't matching what they had been told about the Lord's *awareness*, *concern*, and *remedy* for their plight, cf. 3:7-8; 4:31. As we've noted in previous lessons, sometimes it gets worse before it gets better, and we must have *faith in* and *patience with* God's *process* and *timing*. These are exactly the lessons good leaders know and convey to those who want to believe and do what it is right, but the difficulties of their personal circumstances make it hard to patiently persevere, cf. 1Pet.4:1-2,12-16.

See what we can learn about spiritual leadership from just one verse? Let's put it into action!

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Discussion Questions

1. Generally, why did Israel (and do we as “sheep”) need leadership in Ex.6:9?
2. From Heb.5:11-14, what is required to “*discern good and evil*”?
3. Given the answer to the previous question, what should good leaders do help and guide the spiritually *immature to maturity*?
4. Generally, what contributed to Israel’s refusal to listen to Moses? What should good leaders do today when those they’re attempting to help won’t listen?
5. What does v.9b mean when it says the people wouldn’t listen because of their “*despondency*”? Why do you suppose they were so *despondent*?
6. What should good leaders do to help and guide the *despondent*?
7. To what else does v.9c also attribute Israel’s unwillingness to listen to Moses (and therefore, God)? To what does this specifically refer?
8. What should good leaders do to help and guide those experiencing *persecution* today?