

Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses

Lesson #20, God's Means Are "Just" Regardless of the Ends

Text: Ex.7:3

Though some credit Joseph Fletcher as the *father* of "situation ethics," the concept was debated 50 years before his book, "Situation Ethics" (1997), sought to define and develop the philosophy. Fletcher argues for *Pragmatism, Relativism, Positivism, and Personalism* as the guide for moral or ethical decisions and actions. He further puts forth that: Proposition #1- "Only one thing is intrinsically good; namely love (*agape*); nothing else at all;" Proposition #5- "Only the end justifies the means, nothing else;" and therefore, Proposition #6- "Love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively." The result is that people must decide what is "right" for them *personally* and *relative* to their own *situation* (which is *antinomian*, or *against law*) rather than by *absolute moral standards* (God's or man's, except as dictated by *love*). Therefore, whatever is "wrong" for *everyone* based on law may be "right" for the *me* in a particular circumstance if the *ends* are thought to "justify" the *means* used to accomplish them, cf. Rom.3:8. **Why should any of this matter to us in our study of spiritual leadership?** First, passages such as Ex.7:3 (and Matt.12:1-8) are used as *proof texts* for the concept; and second, *spiritual leadership* is based on helping others see and do what is *divinely* (therefore *objectively*) "right" rather than *personally* (therefore *subjectively*) "right for me in my situation."

So what's wrong with "situation ethics"? It: denies the absolute sovereignty of God, 2Chron.20:6; Rom.9:20-21; makes "right" and "wrong" *subjective* and *personal* rather than *objective* and *universal*, Acts 17:29-31; John 12:48; and it turns each person into his or her own god, who, unsurprisingly, rarely (if ever) does anything "wrong," Rom.3:9-23; 7:7-8.

But let's be clear: Ex.7:3 is **not** "situation ethics." God was/is the creator, sustainer, and sole arbiter of everything, **but is also always absolutely righteous and just**, and therefore does not need to "justify" His actions (either to *man* or because they are otherwise "wrong") in any situation. Likewise, though surely "*Lord of the Sabbath*," Jesus did not *set aside* the Law or *except* His disciples' otherwise *sinful actions* because of a "situation." Note clearly that He said they were "*innocent*" in Matt.12:7. One may be "guilty" but "pardoned" for several reasons, but there is only one way to be "innocent"- to have done nothing wrong. **God is always just.**

What should we learn about spiritual leadership from Ex.7:3?

- **Spurned opportunities to "do the right thing" often have dire consequences.** Pharaoh could have believed God's messenger (Moses) and mustered sufficient faith to do the right thing back in 5:1, but he didn't, 5:2. Because of this (and other atrocities, cf. 4:7; 5:10-19), sovereign God decided to *show* Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the rest of the world from that day to this, His power, cf. 6:1 and 7:5. Good leaders know and teach the dangers of spurned opportunities, 2Thess.2:11-12; Jas.4:17.
- **Signs and wonders are not always "good" things.** The *signs* and *wonders* that would *multiply* in Egypt were *plagues* not blessings. Even today, I'm convinced that God sometimes *providentially* (no miracles needed) uses hardships and tragedies to "get our attention," refocus it on Him and righteousness, and even to allow us undergo various *trials* and *tests* as a means of growth and development, cf. 2Cor.12:7-11 and Jas.1:1-12. Good leaders understand this, and help others to "see" and deal with these "opportunities for growth" properly and in a way that *increases* rather than *decreasing* or *destroying* faith.
- **One way or another, God's will prevails.** Pharaoh could *help* or *hinder*, but God's will was going to prevail- Israel was leaving Egypt. They could go peacefully and with Pharaoh's blessing, or with much pain, suffering, and loss to the Egyptians, but they were leaving either way. Pharaoh could *soften* and *bend* his will to God's, or he could *harden* his heart (cf. 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35) and thus insure God would *harden* it even further to his own destruction, but God's will would be done. Good leaders know and help others to see that "*every knee should bow*" and "*every tongue should confess*" **now** while there is opportunity to do so freely (Phil.2:9-11), for a time will come when, forced to *bow* and *confess*, it is too late for salvation, Rom.14:10b-12.

Spiritual leaders know and show that: 1) God is always just/fair; and, 2) we must determine what it is "right" based on God's Word, rather than our logic based on a particular situation.

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Discussion Questions

1. Please summarize the basic concept of "situation ethics" as a means of determining *right* and *wrong*.

2. Please provide at least 3 (more if you like) fundamental fallacies of "situation ethics."

3. Why is God not using "situation ethics" in Ex.7:3?

4. Why is Jesus not using "situation ethics" in Matt.12:1-8?

5. How does Pharaoh illustrate that "Spurned Opportunities to do the right thing often have dire consequences"?

6. What do good spiritual leaders understand and teach regarding the dangers of "spurned opportunities"?

7. How do we know that *signs and wonders* (miracles) are not always "good" things?

8. What do good spiritual leaders know and show others about "bad" things that happen to them?

9. Does God's *prediction* in 3:19 remove Pharaoh's *free will* (to chose and do the "right" thing) in 5:1 and subsequent opportunities? Why, or why not?

10. Please explain how/why God *hardening Pharaoh's heart* is not unfair or *unjust*.

11. As relating to *spiritual leadership*, what are the two primary lessons to be learned from this lesson?