

These days, with all our staff changes, I have been reviewing resumes and thinking about what people put on them.

- People put their accomplishments, their work history, their education, and even their friends' names on their resume. They always look nice.
- But I would love to know what they did not put on their resume. For example, several years ago, a candidate made it into our top four. I had the team research these four via the internet, to cyberstalk them and find out what was not written on their resume. About 30 minutes later, I got a call from one of the team members. The candidate he was cyberstalking was dangerous. He always managed to resign and move just as the local newspapers began reporting his deviancy. It explained his work history and why he would take a huge pay cut to work for us. We immediately went down to three candidates.
- I want to know the good parts, too. The parts that grew their character. Did we grow through our mistakes and failures, or did they become life-altering handicaps.
- Like scar tissue, our past failures make us stronger and maybe less flexible.

I think about my successes and wounds, and it was the wounds that really built character. For example, many years ago, I had a resume with successes and education to become the interim pastor at a large church near Chicago. The interim position ended, and God shut down everything in the Midwest.

The SNE superintendent thought I would do well here at South Attleboro, but the leaders at that time went with Pastor Squibb instead. The superintendent said, 'I've got nothing your size.'

Because we were in the adoption process, and I needed to be employed full time to complete the adoption, I said, 'Size does not matter to me.' 'Are you sure,' he replied? 'Yes, I just need to be employed full time,' I responded. 'I've got a church of 20 that can afford a full-time pastor.' Then he joked, 'hello, are you still there?' That was how we went from a church of 1,000 to a church of 20 without a moral fall.

I did not realize how much pride was in my heart until that move. Yes, we experienced 'success' that could be put on a resume, but the real backstory was God squeezing pride

from my heart. I am still a work in progress. Looking back, I needed that desert-like experience to lead this church.

God makes men in the desert not in the spotlight. A.W. Tozer, echoes the thought: 'It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.' – A.W. Tozer

You would expect the resume of the greatest OT figure to be impressive, but instead, we see God crushing and sidelining him until humility was fully formed. 'Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth (Nu 12:3 NIV).' I know there is a correlation between Moses' humility and the great miracles he did.

- The Bible says that 'The Lord would speak to Moses, face to face, as one speaks to a friend (Ex 33:11 NIV).'
- Moses spent 80 years of preparation for 40 years of ministry.

Today is the last message on OT characters. Through their lives and stories, we have learned a lot about godly character and faith.

- Next Sunday we begin the Christmas season.
- Today we are going to look at how God humbled Moses so that he could fulfill his calling.

Moses Humility



Moses should not have lived.

1. Egypt.

He was born to slave parents whose midwife was under orders to kill all males upon birth.

- It was long time ago and Israel had moved in with Egypt to survive a seven-year famine.
- Egypt was under Joseph's leadership; he was the number 2 man in Egypt. 200 years later, Joseph is forgotten, and the Israelites are slaves.
- Israel has grown so numerous that Pharaoh is worried they might overthrow Egypt.

Moses survived because the pharaoh's daughter found him floating in a basket and took him home.

- The princess drew him out of the water and called him 'Moses,' which means to 'draw out.' Prophetic, as he would draw Israel out of Egypt.
- For 40 years he lived in Pharaoh's palace, spoke ancient Egyptian, and was educated by the best Egypt had to offer.
- It was well known that Moses was a Hebrew. Moses believed he was uniquely placed to help his people.

The story goes, 'He went out to visit his own people, the Hebrews, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews. ¹² After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand (Ex 2:11-12 NLT).'

Moses wanted to rescue his people from Egypt; He 'felt himself so eminently qualified,'¹ but he was impulsive and brutal. 'The next day, when Moses went out to visit his people again, he saw two Hebrew men fighting. "Why are you beating up your friend?" Moses said to the one who had started the fight. ¹⁴ The man replied, "Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Then Moses was afraid, thinking, "Everyone knows what I did." ¹⁵ And sure enough, Pharaoh heard what had happened, and he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian (Ex 2:13-15 NLT).' Midian is an area in the southeastern part of the Sinai desert. You don't vacation in Midian, you avoid it.

Moses tried it his way in his time, but his dream died when he murdered the Egyptian.

'The root of all sin is self-sufficiency – independence from the rule of God.'²

- Think of Satan, a glorious angel, who thought 'I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High (Is 14:14 NIV).'
- Eve thought, my eyes will be opened, and I will be 'like God, knowing good and evil (Ge 3:5 NIV).'
- 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way (Is 53:6 NIV).'

The first forty years of Moses' life wasted on one impulsive moment - apparently.

2. Desert.

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, in Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, eds, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 Genesis – Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2008), p. 362.

² Charles E. Hummel, 'Tyranny of the Urgent! (Pamphlet)', (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994 rev. ed), pp. 13-14.

In the desert, Moses finds himself helping some young ladies by a well and they invite him home to eat. Soon, he finds himself married to Zipporah and he becomes a shepherd. He submitted no resume. It was not an aspired job – it came by default.

The Bible is quiet about the next forty years of Moses' life in the desert:

- It is stated that Moses named his son Gershom – which means 'alien.' Moses felt like an alien in both cultures. Every day was a brutal reminder that he belonged someplace else.
- Another thing is that the people of Israel cried out in deep suffering. 'God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act (Ex 2:24 NLT).' God was not inactive; He knew what was going on. He waited until the time was right.
- We can infer that shepherding must have been a soul-crushing job for Moses. He was raised as a prince, a leader of men, but now he had little human company.
- We can also infer that Moses learned how to survive and lead sheep in the desert. He was being toughened-up and educated in wilderness survival.

God does not waste your wounds; He uses them for His plans.

- God will not give you great responsibility until you have been found faithful with little things – sheep before nations.

God makes men in the desert not in the spotlight.

I imagine the days of the week blurred into each other. Each day was the same one before it. Years turned into decades, and Moses slowly aged, but ...

3. The Burning Bush.

'One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. ³ "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it (Ex 3:1-3 NLT)."

Moses had pushed the flock far into the desert to find pasture for them, when he sees a strange sight.

God uses common things, the everyday circumstances of our lives to do the extraordinary.

There were millions of these little bushes in the desert, but this one was different. Though it caught on fire, it did not burn up.

‘God chooses the small and the despised burning bush as his medium of revelation, and he waits to see how sensitive Moses is toward the insignificant and small things of life before he invests him with larger tasks.’³

‘When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses! Moses!” “Here I am!” Moses replied. ⁵ “Do not come any closer,” the Lord warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ⁶ I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God (Ex 3:4-6 NLT).’

It is when Moses move closer to look, God spoke. If you turn to God today, if you look for Him you will find Him.

God sets up a boundary ‘to prevent him from rashly intruding into God’s presence and to teach him that God is separate and distinct from mortal human beings ... what has been ordinary becomes “holy ground” ... by God’s presence.’⁴

Moses is instructed to remove his sandals. His feet were dirty, so what was going on? God always demands some action or movement – lifting of hands, the bowing of the head -when we come into his presence. A simple offering of humility.

When God announces who he is Moses covers his face, afraid to look at God. Perhaps, that dead Egyptian’s face probably flashed through Moses’ mind.

- Humility is knowing ourselves ‘in relation to God’ and that everything we have is from God and his love.⁵
- Humility is when ‘We acknowledge our need of God’s guidance and empowerment ... when we are living in complete dependence on God.’⁶
- James writes, ‘Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up (Ja 4:10 NIV).’

God makes men in the desert not in the spotlight. The old, accomplished Moses was gone, but the new Moses was finally humbled to perfection. He was a broken, cracked

³ Kaiser, *EBC*, p. 364.

⁴ Kaiser, *EBC*, p. 365.

⁵ W.L. Walker, in James Orr, ed., “Humility” in *ISBE Vol. III* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), pp. 1439-50 (1439).

⁶ Hummel, ‘Tyranny of the Urgent!’, pp. 13-14.

pot. God loves to use broken, humbled crackpots: 'We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2Co 4:7 NIV).' It is not the pot that is important, but the treasure inside.

4. Commissioned.

'Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey ... ⁹ Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt (Ex 3:7-10 NLT).'"

Forty years ago, Moses would have taken out his resume, now he has serious doubts about himself and this calling. Just look at all the excuses he comes up with:

Moses' Five Objections

1. Who am I to go to Pharaoh (Ex 3:11-12)?

'I will be with you (Ex 3:12 NLT).'

2. What if they ask what your name is (Ex 3:13-22)?

'I AM WHO I AM (Ex 3:14 NLT).' Again, God is reassuring Moses of His presence and power to accomplish His plan. 'I am truly he who exists and who will be ... present then and there in the situation to which I am sending you.'⁷

3. What if they will not believe me (Ex 4:1-9)?

Signs promised: staff / snake, leprosy, river into blood.

4. What about my slow tongue (Ex 4:10-12)? I find this one hard to believe. He says this as he is communicating with God!

Aaron will go with you and speak (4:14).

5. Why can you not find someone else (Ex 4:13-17)?

I will speak to you, you will speak to Aaron, he will speak to Pharaoh (Ex 4:16).

God is the God of second chances, but in Moses' case, I believe it is more accurate to say that God humbled Moses to get his ego out of the way. For God to use Moses mightily, Moses had to learn it was God's power not his. He was just a cracked pot that happened to contain the glorious power of God.

⁷ Kaiser, *EBC*, p. 371.

Moses would ...

- Turn the Nile to blood.
- Summon frogs, gnats, flies, hail, locust, and darkness.
- Painful boils or the death of every firstborn followed his words.
- He would hold up his arms and part the Red Sea or defeat an enemy.
- He would talk with God face to face.
- He prayed and God fed millions in the desert.
- At times, fire would fall from heaven or the ground open and swallow detractors.

He was still a flawed human ...

- He got angry and struck the rock.
- He let others lead a coup against him.

But he knew his place before God. He sang, 'Who is like you ... O Lord— glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders? ...¹³With your unfailing love you lead the people you have redeemed ... ¹⁸The Lord will reign forever and ever (Ex 15:11, 13, 18 NLT)!

Jesus said, 'whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it (Mt 16:25 NIV).' Moses was a powerful leader, because he died to his own resume and abilities and became the humblest man on the planet.

He reminds me of someone else.

5. Incarnation.

'Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross (Phil 2:3-8 NIV).'

Jesus, very God himself, emptied himself of his divinity and became a human infant. God moved toward humanity to save us. Our Christmas messages will be about Immanuel – God with us.

Everything spiritual all starts with movement:

- Moses turned and saw the bush.
- Moses took off his sandals.

- Jesus took of his divinity.
- We must 'Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life (Ep 4:22 NLT).'
- We must move towards God.

Conclusion.

Later, on Mount Sinai, when Moses asked to see God's glory (Ex 33:18), God allowed Moses a glimpse of his departure. Moses fell on his face in worship.

Right now, in response to Moses' and Jesus' example, will you move towards God?

No stories, no coercion, no manipulation right now. You came to come to worship – to move towards God.

If you want to humble yourself before God, there needs to be movement. Make some movement towards God, let his speak to you.

- Come to the altar, or picture it a burning bush if you wish.
- Raise your hands.
- Move your tongues.
- Kneel where you are at.

Come and throw off your old self, learn who you really are in the light of God's glorious presence. You will never be so fully you – free to become your true self – as when you are living in complete dependence on God.⁸

⁸ Adapted from: 'We acknowledge our need of God's guidance and empowerment ... such dependence does not limit or repress human personality. We are never so fully personal – free to become our true selves – as when we are living in complete dependence on God', Hummel, 'Tyranny of the Urgent!', pp. 13-14.