

God's Wilderness Training for Leadership What kind of servant are you?

Hebrews 11

I like the scriptures that__read from Romans. The scriptures at the end talk about how to _____. All on the foundation of the first 3 scriptures. Have you read those scriptures? It says to "present your bodies". Many people misunderstand those scriptures. They say "Lord, here is my body. I will serve you, and I will minister for you." But that is not exactly what he meant. Because our bodies are vessels. In 2 Corinthians it calls our body "an earthen vessel". It calls him the treasure. He is the One who is able to produce the fruit that is in Romans, chapter 12. So we present our bodies the vessels of Jesus Christ.

Heb. 11:24-26 "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

I want you to remember what it says about Moses in these verses concerning his character. We're going to be talking about this in a minute. First, turn to Acts 7:22:

"And Moses was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

And when he was a full 40 years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

And, seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian.

For he supposed his brethren would have understood how God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

And the next day he showed himself unto them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

Wilt thou kill me as thou did the Egyptian yesterday?

Then Moses fled at this saying and was a stranger in the land of Midian where he begat two sons.

And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him." (Acts 7:22-31)

Moses knew that he was to be the deliverer. He had a miraculous birth. Pharaoh went out and killed all of the babies that were born in Israel--except Moses. God miraculously saved Moses. It was an absolute miracle that he didn't die. Not only did he save his life, He also provided for him. As a baby

he was put in a basket, floated down the river where the daughter of pharaoh found him. So, he was not only saved, he was well taken care of .

This is the way it is with Christianity. We're saved, and God takes care of us. But, there was more to Moses' story than just being saved and enjoying God provisions. Likewise, as Christians, there is supposed to be more to our story also. God has a plan for our lives.

So, he was taken into Pharaoh's house. It was a great house, and Moses had all of the comforts that he needed or could have wanted. In that great house he was taught all of the wisdom of Egypt. Then, one day he understood something very special. Something that he did not learn from the "wisdom of Egypt". God had a plan for his life. This plan wasn't that he should just be comfortable or happy. He was to serve the Lord. Moses came into this understanding.

One day Moses went outside and saw an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite. Moses thought to himself, "I'm the deliverer!" So, he went over to deliver the Israelite, and ended up killing the Egyptian. He was the deliverer, alright, but this was not God's method of deliverance for the Israelites. Remember this the next time you get angry with someone!

Moses understood the plan of God for his life. He understood that he was God's chosen. But, now, let us understand something: Moses was God's chosen vessel, but there is a difference between being God's chosen, and being God's chosen vessel. Do you see the difference? It is in your attitude. If you are a chosen vessel, you understand that it is "Christ in you". You understand that you are a vessel, but He is the light and the power. It is not your might, it is not your ability, but it is him. I want you to see the difference here--a difference between being a chosen vessel, and being God's chosen. YOU can say, "I am God's chosen; I am special. So I am going to serve the Lord". If that is your concept, then you are not a vessel because our emphases is on you, and not on him. This is what God wants: That you are the vessel, and the treasure is his Son. That is why he placed Jesus in you. If He just wanted you to be good, Jesus wouldn't have had to come and die. He would have stayed in heaven and just shouted down to us: "Be good!! Don't do that ! Do this!" But, you see, he didn't do that. He didn't stay in heaven. He didn't just come to earth, he came in us. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Moses did not understand this. He only understood that he was to serve God, but he did not understand that he was a vessel.

Let us look more closely at Moses. THE Bible describes him in Hebrews, chapter 11 where some wonderful things are said about him. It says that he was accused of being a traitor in Egypt. Also, he refused position even though he was considered the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He might have been Pharaoh one day! All of these traits are commendable. He refused money--including "all of the treasures of Egypt". He refused position; he refused the

fragrances of sin. He even accepted the reproaches of Christ. Now this is a good man, is it not? If you had someone like this in your church, you would tell all of the people, "We have a good man in our church." He is not motivated by money, or position, and he is dedicated to God. This is the way Moses was.

Now, I want you to notice something very important. something was missing. Something more important than all of these excellent characteristics. That "something" would take God 40 years to produce in Moses. Moses was now 40 years old. He had all of these great character traits, but, God said to him, "You are not ready. You have the character, but you're not ready. So, I'm going to get you ready. I'm going to put you in school. It is called the "School of the Wilderness." Do you want to go to school? Well, let me ask this question: Do you want to be used of God? If your heart says, "Amen", then you should look to the wilderness. Moses needed the wilderness. He had great wisdom, and great virtue, but he needed the Word in him.

What a tremendous lesson we must learn: It is "not I, but Christ who lives in me". Note that in the verses which we read in Acts that Moses thought that the Israelites would "understand". Understand what? Understand that he was "The Deliverer". So, when he dealt with the Egyptian, he thought that all of Israel would gather behind him. He thought that they would say, "You are our leader! We salute you!" But, that did not happen. Instead, the people said to him, "Are you going to kill us, too?" You see, they did not trust him because he was not yet prepared. This must have been very disturbing to Moses. He was willing to give up Egypt and all of the treasures. He stepped out and taken some action to help them. Now, Pharaoh wanted to kill him, and Israel was telling him, "We're not going to follow you". That is hard. This man is called of God. He has good character.

I am sure that Moses asked this question: "Why isn't this working out? I'm better than a lot of them here. I love you. I want to see you glorified. So, why is everything so bad?". Have you ever asked that question? You wonder why it is not the way it should be. The answer is that before God wants to use you for other people, he first deals with you. You are first to him. That is his heart: you first, and then others. So, Pharaoh wants to kill Moses, Israel refuses to follow him, what did he do? He went into the wilderness--all alone.

What does it feel like in the wilderness? Like nobody cares. Like God has left you. You feel alone. God led Moses there for forty years. Why did he do that? Is it because he is mean? No! God loves you, but he cannot use you unless he first prepares you. Moses went on into the wilderness where he learned to take care of sheep. This was a terrible state of affairs. Why? Because Moses was raised in Egypt, and the Bible says that the Egyptians hated shepherds! (Gen. 46:34) Read it for yourself.

God wanted Moses to be a vessel. God did not want him to be an initiator, He wanted him to be _____ (examined). When we hear the call of

God, and we hear what we are supposed to do, we think that we are supposed to do it. "I'm called to do this! I'd better go and do it!" Not so. It is true that you are called --to be his vessel. Do you see the difference? So, Moses is in the wilderness, a place of being emptied out. He had sheep and rocks and mountains. Nothing else. For him, all the wisdom, power and wealth of Egypt is gone. It is certainly not doing him any good there in the wilderness. He can not use it. What is he going to do? Talk to the sheep: "Oh, let me tell you my great wisdom!" The sheep listen to all of these great things, but what do they care? All of that does not make any difference out in the desert.

Suddenly all of the wisdom begins to fade. All of the ability begins to leave him. In the wilderness, however, Moses is learning some new things. He is learning how to lead sheep. The Israelites were the sheep of God's pasture³. So, Moses was learning what it was like to go before the sheep and for them to follow him. He was also learning the wilderness because he was going to take Israel into the wilderness, and lead them through it. But, at the time, he did not understand all of that. He could not see how what God had him doing was going to glorify him. He felt that he had totally failed. Remember Acts 7:22: "Moses was learned in all of the wisdom of Egypt and was mighty in words and in deeds." Look now in Exodus 4:10-12. Now, remember how it read in the book of Acts: "He was mighty in words and deeds". "And Moses said to the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou has spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

Moses was mighty in word and in deed! People could look at him and say, "He's the big man! He sure knows how to speak. I am impressed with him." But God did something with the big man. He placed him in the wilderness, stripped away all of his strength and all of his ability. Forty years later God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and spoke to him there. God said, "Now I want you to deliver Israel!" But, what was Moses response? "I can not do it! I do not know how! I can not lead the people! I am not able!" Moses was now in a perfect position. Listen to what the Lord said: "I made you mouth. I am with you, and it is not you nor your responsibility. It is my responsibility. I am in you, and I will speak through you and give you the words. The people who hear you now will not think about how great you are. They will say, "Moses speaks the Word of God". How different than before.

I have been a pastor for many years, and have been involved in some kind of ministry for 27 years. I have seen people come to the church who have great abilities and talents. They can speak because they are great orators. There is usually a problem, however. Too much self. Did you ever see that? Flesh is the same everywhere. They come to church and say, "Use me. I want to be used of God." There are many churches who will say, "I'll take you.

You are very valuable." This is not, however, what I say. I say, "NO, you are not ready. You need to go into the wilderness. You need to be emptied out, and let Christ come forth in you. You need to let him live his life through you." "I must decrease, but he must increase" is the way that John the Baptist said it. that is God's plan. But, you may say, if I do not accept these people, my church will not grow.

Many of you know Scott Moore. Scott came to my church 12 years ago. When he came he could not lead worship. He was bad. Really bad. But, God told me something. He said, "Let Scott lead worship." I told God, "If I obey you, everybody will leave the church." But he said that he wanted Scott to lead the worship. So I let Scott lead. ahe could not play the guitar very well, but as time went on Christ began to come forth out of him. Now he writes worship and other songs to the Lord. and, htey are so beautiful. I can not believe it! Now when he leads worship it is like angels singing. It is so good. I am glad I obeyed the Lord. Now, I am not saying that you should get somebody bad to lead your worship. You need someone who wants to be in front, but someone who will step back and let the spirit move. If someone steps forward and says, "Let me do it!" you may see flesh, and you may smell burnt flesh. Have you ever smelled burnt flesh? We are supposed to be a sweet savor to the Lord, not an oder of dead flesh.

So the Lord speaks to Moses in the burning bush and tells him: "Now you are ready".

And Moses said something back to God. He said, "No, I am not!"

God said, "Yes you are!"

Moses wanted to know why God was showing up now. "Why did you not come forth years ago? I was ready. I had ability. I had desire. I was motivated. But, you did not come then. You have come now. I am burned out! Do no ask me."

"Yep! you are ready. You are my vessel."

God then told Moses to put his hand inside his robe next to his heart, then pull it out again. When Moses pulled his hand out it was leprous. God said, "That is what you are like on the inside without me." Leprousy. God then told Moses to put his hand back inside the robe again, and then to once more pull it out. No leprosy. That is you and me. God said that when we look at ourselves, we will see leprosy. But, when we look at him, it will be life. You know this. When you look at yourself, you think, "I am not worthy; I can not do it." Well, you are looking in the wrong place. Look at the Lord. But, this whole thing has ot be the work of the cross in us, emptying us out so that Christ, the treasure can be seen. "Christ in you the hope of glory." That is my hope.

In the Old Testament there is a story found in Exodus 21 about an unusual form of servanthood. When an Israelite becomes a servant to another Israelite, and he has served him for many years there comes a time when there is a change. That change occurs in the year of Jubilee. At that time the Israelite slaves could go free and were no longer subject to their masters. Or, they could choose another alternative. He could stay in that household and be a "love slave". The choice was up to the servant. When that man became a servant, the master could say, "Go bring me that", or the children say, "Go make my bed", and he must do it. He is the servant and it is his responsibility. But, there came a day in the Year of Jubilee when he was given a choice: He could leave, or --he could stay. He was no longer required to stay. He must choose to stay. His choice, however, would be based on his love for his master and for his family.

If the servant chose to stay, a certain procedure was followed. The master took him outside to the doorpost where the servant leaned over and placed his ear on that doorpost. Then he took an awl (an instrument of piercing) and pierced his ear. From then on, whenever any one saw that ear with the scar, they said, "He is a love servant". He was no longer a "bond" servant.

There are two pictures in all of this. One is of Jesus, and the other one concerns us. Jesus chose to stay with us. We do not deserve it, but he chose to stay with us out of love. He withstood his ear being pierced, as well as his hands and his feet. Something else that it tells in this Exodus story relates that if the master gave the slave a wife and they had children, if he chose to leave his place of serving, his wife and children must stay with the master. However, if he chose to stay, declaring that he loves his master, his wife, and his children, then he would keep his family and be together with them always. He would stay because of love. One day we will be with Jesus. Think about this: the servant stayed because of love. When all of the work is finished at the end of the day, and he sits down in front of the fire, his wife and children all gather around him there. They are enjoying their great time together when the wife looks up at his ear and sees the scar. She wants to cry. "You chose to stay when you could have left," she says. "You could have been free, but you stayed because you loved us." One day in eternity we will sit at the feet of Jesus, and look at his hands and feet, and we will begin to cry as we look in his face and say, "You did not have to, but you chose to because you loved us." What words will we be able to say? Jesus will ever be joined to us.

I said that this story relates in two ways: to Jesus, and to us. Many people serve God, they serve the master, and they serve his family, but out of what spirit do they serve him? Because they are required to? Because it is their duty? Or, out of love? We get upset with people when they mistreat us. So, we stop serving him. That is not a love servant. We must be taken to the doorpost and have our ear pierced. What does that mean? It means that our hearing will be affected by the Cross. That is what that means. After that,

when we hear ugly words spoken to us, we will hear through the Cross. You, the family of God in this place are like the "master" in the story. And you can be his loveslaves: "I serve you Lord because I love you. And, I seve you, brothers and sisters in Christ, because I love you." If I am only a bondslave, I can quit and leave. I can go out hte door and never come back. But, if I am a loveslave, I will serve him, not because it is required, but because love him.