



Last night our CPC Pillars Ministry had their Spaghetti Dinner. I shared with them something I heard this past week. “People are like plants. Some go to seed with age, others just go to pot.” What do seeds do? When they are spread around they birth new life, they miraculously reproduce. One guy said, “That’s great Dan, but some of us are weeds. Do you really want us reproducing?” I know one thing—as we grow older, God doesn’t want us sitting around and going to pot.

We see a great example of a guy who grew older and probably thought that the usefulness of his life had passed him by, even worse that he had fumbled his opportunity to make a difference and his destiny was to live out his days on the other side of the mountain. This man was Moses. He is the focus of Chapter 4 of The Story. Moses was the man God used to deliver his people from a crisis. So let’s go back and look at Moses’ life. What was the crisis that God appointed Moses to help?

Remember back two weeks ago? Remember how God raised up Joseph? How Joseph was mistreated and misunderstood for a period of time until God elevated him to a place of high honor in the Egyptian government? And how he saved not just millions of people from famine, but his family too, and his family was able to move from Canaan into the best real estate available in Egypt, a place called “The Land of Goshen?” In Goshen the family prospered. The 12 brothers grew their families. And they grew and they grew. One commentator said they multiplied like rabbits.

About 350 years after Joseph’s death a new Pharaoh reigned in Egypt who cared nothing about Joseph and his service to the Egyptian government. In fact this Pharaoh became fearful that the Hebrews would turn against the Egyptians, would fight back or would up and leave and devastate the Egyptian economy. So the new Pharaoh instituted an oppressive policy. He made these Hebrews slaves.

“But the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly” (Ex. 1:12–14).

Life for the Hebrews had taken a hard left turn from what it was in the glory days of Joseph—from saviors to slaves. It was a crisis bearing down on 1 to 3 million Hebrews in captivity in Egypt.

God’s Upper Story and God’s Lower Story seemed in doubt. Yet it is important for all of us, especially those of us who right now see ourselves enslaved. Maybe there is a Pharaoh in your life making life miserable. Remember this: We are about to see that hard times don’t erase God’s promises. And not only that, hard times don’t escape God’s notice. God’s timing is always perfect, but rarely is it our timing. Enter the deliverer.

“Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months” (2:2).

His father’s name was Amram. His mother’s name was Jochebed. So why did Moses’ mother hide him? If you read the story, Pharaoh took evil to a new level. He began a policy of male infanticide. During this dark time in Hebrew history, Moses was born. How difficult must that have been to hide your infant for three months? We can read that Moses already had two older siblings when he was born. The oldest child was a girl named Miriam who was 7-12 years older than Moses. And Aaron, who was three years older than Moses. He was the one who later became Moses’ right-hand man.

Fine Child. This translation suggests a good boy who didn’t cry much, but in the original language it is likely that Moses was a beautiful baby, attractive and well formed, and that Jochebed likely sensed something special about their new child.

“But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him” (2:3-4).

She gets a basket, covers it with thick sticky tar so it would be watertight, and puts her beautiful son in the basket among the reeds outside of Pharaoh’s palace where Pharaoh’s daughter would come down to bathe in the Nile. Then Moses’ mom had Moses’ sister Miriam stand watch from a distance.

Sure enough the Pharaoh’s daughter saw Moses floating in his basket, probably heard him crying and she “took pity” on him even though she knew he was a Hebrew. At the proper moment Miriam approached the Pharaoh’s daughter and said, “Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?” Pharaoh’s daughter said yes, and Miriam went and got her mother and Jochebed nursed and cared for her son in Pharaoh’s palace, and she even got paid wages to do it. Eventually Moses was weaned and Pharaoh’s daughter took over parenting the young boy. In fact Pharaoh’s daughter named him Moses, which means “to draw out,” drawn out of the Nile. Now we see this young man develop, the good, the bad and the ugly.

In chapter 7 of the book of Acts we read a sermon delivered by Stephen right before he was stoned to death, and in that sermon he gives us a great summary of Moses’s life. **“When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him in and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action” (Acts. 7:21-22).**

Stephen breaks out Moses’s life into three 40-year periods totaling 120 years of life. The first 40 was in the Egyptian Palace,

the next 40 was on the back side of the desert leading up to the Exodus, and the final 40 was the wanderings in the wilderness. We fast forward and we see Moses is a pretty immature 40-year-old. Here is how Stephen explains it. *“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not”* (Acts. 7:23-25.)

Did you catch that last sentence? Moses must have known that in some way God was going to use him to rescue his people. So he gets out of the palace and strikes an Egyptian, and figures the rescue has begun. He must have thought he would rescue from a position of political economic power. But that wasn't God's plan.

Chuck Swindoll, one of my favorite Bible teachers said, “The three periods of Moses's life have been described this way: Moses spent the first 40 years of his life thinking he was somebody, his middle years of his life learning that he was a nobody, and his final 40 years discovering what mighty deeds God could perform through a nobody.”

“The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’ The man said, ‘Who are you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought, ‘What I did must have become known’” (2:13-14).

Heard the old adage, God helps those who help themselves? This adage is contradicted by scripture. Perhaps most clearly contradicted in the life of Moses. The truth of the scripture is God helps those who trust in him.

“When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well” (2:15).

All this training in Egyptian culture, all this opportunity he was sure he was given, down the tubes. He blew it. He was a scared felon on the run. He was on an Egyptian Wanted Poster, Dead or Alive. He was mocked by his fellow Hebrews. Moses was a 40-year-old failure. He had blown a Harvard education. But we will soon see that God designed all these experiences Moses had in his Lower Story to fulfill his Upper Story. In the same way couldn't it be possible that God has designed the experiences of your life to help prepare you for the challenges ahead? As Moses sat down by that well, he had to be crying out to God, “Help me see all this through the eyes of heaven! Because through the eyes of man my life is a disaster.”

“During that long period the king of Egypt died....” (2:23a).

During that 40 years in Midian to the east, a flat barren area covered by sand and rocks, Moses made a life. At the well he helped seven Midianite sisters fill their troughs with water to water their sheep. When the girls got back to their dad and he wondered why they finished watering so fast, they told him that an Egyptian man had helped them. Then dad said, “What are you thinking? Go get him and invite him to dinner. I need a son-in-law.” So Moses joined the family, married Zipporah and they had a son he named Gershom saying, “I have become an alien in a foreign land.”

So this Hebrew who was educated and lived in the most advanced culture on earth was now raising his family in a wasteland. And he was maturing. Who were his teachers? He didn't go to the University of Cairo. He went to the University of Obscurity—how to cope with being a nobody. He learned a ton being in charge of dumb and dirty sheep. It wasn't even his own flock; it was his father-in-law's.

He went to the University of Time. Moses had become impatient with God's timetable for deliverance, so he speeded things up by committing murder. He had to learn to wait on the Lord.

How about the University of Solitude? The desert was a quiet and lonely place that encourages thought and reflection. Moses had the alone time required to deepen his understanding of himself and the Lord.

How about the University of Harsh Conditions? The desert was harsh. Moses had to learn how to live in harsh conditions in order to lead the Hebrews through the trials they would face in the desert.

Are some of us in a desert today? We don't want it, we don't think we need it, we are certainly tired of it, but God is wanting us to accept it. That is where the highest degree of learning and maturing takes place. Meanwhile, what is happening back in Egypt?

“The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (2:23b-25).

Then Moses got the call: Another day just like the last, finishing up his 40-year training program on Mt. Horeb on the far side of the desert.

“There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up” (Ex. 3:2).

Like any of us Moses got curious. What in the world? Why doesn't it burn up?

“When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’” (3:4).

And Moses responded, “Here I am.” God tells him that the piece of desert that he was standing on was now holy ground. Then God identifies himself, and Moses was terrified. He hid his face.

Then in 3:10 God makes the calling perfectly clear: “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt. Now you understand. Forty years ago you thought you were a pretty hot bush yourself and you flamed out quickly and your life was ashes. Look at this bush. It burns but isn't consumed. Moses, I want to make you a bush. I'm going to set you on fire for my work and if you trust me you will not flame out.”

So Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and they don't believe me? Who shall I say sent me?”

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ This is what you say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (3:14).

In the Hebrew language the divine name **I AM** is only written with the consonants **YHWH**, likely pronounced Yahweh. We aren't really sure of the pronunciation because the Jews revered the name so much they stopped verbalizing it because they thought it was disrespectful. Instead they spoke the word Adonai which means Lord.

For us today, **I AM** is a declaration of God's eternal existence and unchangeable existence. He is a pure being. Nothing has brought him into existence. He always was and always is and always will be.

Then Moses did what we would all do—make excuses. Suppose they don't believe me, he was worrying. He had a case of the “what ifs.” Then God told Moses to throw his staff on the ground. God turned his staff into a serpent and said, “So they will believe I sent you.” God told him that he would perform miraculous signs. You have my power, Moses. It isn't up to you. Trust me. Moses said, “But God, I don't have the abilities. I can't speak well. I get tongue tied. You know I stutter when I get nervous.” God said, “Who made your mouth Moses? I made your brain, your ears and your eyes. I will be your ears, nose, mouth, throat, voice. I will supplement your weakness.” Moses says, “But I am not qualified. O Lord, please send someone else.” At this point the Lord had lost his patience with Moses. He permitted Aaron to go with him, a decision Moses would regret one day.

“Therefore say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God... And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as possession. I am the LORD’” (6:6–8).

God moves from telling Moses, “Don't worry, I AM has sent you” to “Don't worry, I will deliver you, protect you, redeem you, and bring you to the land I swore to you. You will leave your bondage in Egypt.” But how?

As we expected, Pharaoh rejected Moses' cry to let my people go. So Moses saw that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, no surprise. But to loosen hold of his chosen people God instigated a series of devastating and terrifying plagues. After each plague Pharaoh's heart hardened. After each plague we see he refused to release the Hebrews. After several plagues we see Pharaoh make a promise to release them and then harden his heart and change his mind.

» The plague of blood. All the water of the Nile was changed to blood. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

» Frogs covering the land of Egypt. Piles of dead stinking frogs everywhere one looked. Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

» Gnats or mosquitos over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he refused to listen. Even Pharaoh's magic men said in Ex. 8:19, **“This is the finger of God.”** But Pharaoh would not listen.

» Insects over all the land of Egypt. He refused to release the Hebrews.

» All livestock in Egypt died. He hardened his heart and refused to release the Hebrews.

» Boils on man and animals through the land of Egypt. He hardened his heart and refused to listen.

» Hailstorm on all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh said he would release them and then changed his mind.

» Locusts all over the land of Egypt. Again Pharaoh deceived Moses and refused to release the Hebrews.

» Darkness over all the land of Egypt. He made a bargain and said you can go but you must leave us your livestock. Moses said we need our livestock; Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Nine severe plagues. Nine severe strokes of judgment. Nine times God shows his power over nine different Egyptian Gods—God of the Nile, of birth, of the desert, the sun, the fertility God, sky God, God of crops, God of reproduction on and on. God shows his power with increasing intensity. When we read through these chapters we observe that sometimes Pharaoh hardens his own heart with stubbornness, and other times it is as if God hardens Pharaoh's heart. How do we understand it?

One commentator I read said, “Pharaoh was made more tenacious in his chosen path of unwillingness to allow the Hebrew people to leave Egypt. Sometimes Pharaoh needed no help, and other times Pharaoh needed added ‘courage’ from God to continue in his stubbornness that leads to the 10th plague.”

And finally the 10th plague that would multiply God's power and name throughout Egypt. God said to Moses, **“I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that he will let you go. Every first born son in Egypt will die, from the first born son of Pharaoh who sits on the throne, to the first born son of the slave girl, to the first born son of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt – worse than there has ever been.”**

Then we read that God spoke to Moses and Aaron and told them to prepare the Israelites for the plague which was soon to occur. He instructed them to provide a memorial meal. We are privileged to see God's Story point forward to Christ in high definition as we examine the Passover.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb...” (12:1-3a).

God told Moses, “Not just any lamb, but a lamb that was one year old, thoroughly inspected and unblemished.” Cute and frisky. He even lived in their house for a while and became like a pet. Why? To remind them that the sacrifice made for them was costly. A friend, an innocent was to be killed. The cost of atonement is high.

Pilate, Herod, Annas, Caiaphas thoroughly inspected Christ, but could find no fault in him. Doesn't that remind you of the words in 1 Peter 1:19, **“We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”**

They also said that in Exodus 12:46 that no bone was broken in the lamb. Today when Passovers are celebrated they hold up a shank bone of a lamb as a reminder of the Passover lamb that was killed. Jewish people no longer sacrifice a lamb on Passover because the temple was destroyed. But no one needs to make a sacrifice because Jesus died as the Passover lamb to take punishment for our sin. How interesting the executioners inspected Jesus and saw that he was dead, so they didn't break any bones, but they broke the bones of the thieves to his right and left.

God told Moses in Exodus 12:7-8 to take the blood and put it on the door frames and door posts of their house. Why blood? Because blood is life. Without blood there is no life. Without blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Houses that had applied the blood were spared from God's plague. In the same way we look back and see that Christ shed his blood to rescue people. We need to be covered by the blood of the Lamb to be rescued from judgment.

This night only they were to eat bitter herbs. Bitter because it was to remind them of the bitter days of slavery, that life they were delivered from. It also reminds them that the first born of their families lived because the Passover lambs died. In other words, because of Christ's death, we live. It's bitter. It's so sweet, it's amazing grace that God the Father would let his first and only die to save us.

God goes on to tell Moses that the bread is to be unleavened, that is, without yeast. Why? Because it was eaten in haste. They ate with their cloak tucked into their belts, and sandals on their feet, and a staff in their hand. The bread without yeast had distinct markings. They had strips. Do you remember the prophecy from Isaiah about Jesus, "By his stripes we are healed."? The bread without yeast has pits all over it. Do you remember another prophecy, "He was pierced for my transgressions."? Jesus's body was flogged until stripes were all over his body and pierced through by nails and a spear.

God told Moses that his people would be saved by the blood of the lamb.

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. This is a day you are to commemorate for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD – a lasting ordinance" (12:12–14).

This was to be a lasting annual celebration so the children of Israel would never forget what the Lord had done for their ancestors. Did Moses realize that one day he himself would not just be saved from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians, but

by another lamb, a lamb 1500 years in the future, the lamb of God slain for the sins for the world? And today we are blessed to see the Upper Story. This deliverance was actually deliverance with a small "d." The deliverance with the capital "D" came 1500 years later.

If God can use Moses, he can use anyone. And for you over 40? It wouldn't surprise me that God might use you to accomplish his will on earth even more in the years ahead than he has in your younger days. Why wouldn't he? We are finally getting some wisdom and maturity. It's time to go to seed, not to pot.

As we transition into communion, I want to take you to the New Testament to specific verses describing Jesus' last Passover, or what we call his last supper, where he instructs us to do this in remembrance of him. **"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?'" (Matt. 26:17). "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it all of you. This is the blood of my covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28).**

On November 26, 2008, a gang of terrorists stormed the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, India. After the carnage had left 200 people dead, a reporter interviewed a guest who had been at the hotel for dinner that night. The guest described how he and his friends were eating dinner when they heard gunshots. Someone grabbed him and pulled him under the table. The assassins came striding through the restaurant, shooting at will, until everyone (or so they thought) had been killed. Miraculously this man survived. When the interviewer asked the guest how he lived when everyone else at his table had been killed, he replied, "I suppose because I was covered in someone else's blood, and they took me for dead."

In his book *Has Christianity Failed You?*, author Ravi Zacharias uses this story to illustrate the sufficiency of Christ's death for our sin. This is the perfect metaphor of God's gift through Jesus Christ to each one of us. Because he paid the penalty for our sin—because we are covered in the blood of his sacrifice—we have eternal life.

As John said when he saw Jesus coming toward him, **"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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