

SCRIPTURES FOR 6/25/06 LIFEGROUP LESSON

Acts 7:19-36

"At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him 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.

"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. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?'

"But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

"Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.

"This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.

Deuteronomy 32:48-52

On that same day the LORD told Moses, "Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain

that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

Hebrews 4:14-16

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed

NOTE TO LEADERS: All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we talked about how Joseph was able to do his best for God through his TRUST, how God was able to LEVERAGE Joshua's best, and how the widow's MOTIVE reflected excellence. This week, we will examine two more biblical characters – one to show how God develops His people to strive for excellence, and one to provide a standard against which we can judge our progress.

MOSES (God's pet project)

Have someone read Acts 7:19-36.

So like Joseph, Moses went through trial after trial but eventually he became the central human figure of the Old Testament. What I find interesting about this is the process God used to mold Moses. He had 40 years of learning, 40 years of labor, and finally 40 years of leadership. Think about this in terms of your life: if you were to live 90 years, you wouldn't be out of school until you were 30 and you wouldn't be allowed to lead until you were 60!

Looking at the way God molded Moses, does it make you feel impatient?

Moses was hidden from God during the 40 years of learning, he hid from God during the 40 years of labor, but he couldn't hide from God for the last 40 years. Through all of that time, God was molding Moses for leadership. First, God prepared him with knowledge; then God softened him with humility; finally God shocked him with leadership. But, only after Moses chose to submit to God's will, could God finally use Moses for His excellent purposes.

Are there areas that you cling to and refuse to submit to God?

Do you think submitting them might improve your chances of serving in excellence?

Though his specific situation and circumstances were different, Moses was no different than us. He was a fallible, selfish, complicated, fearful, person just like you and me. And like Moses, God wants to use you and me to accomplish His excellent purposes. But first we must submit.

God showed us with the example of Moses that He can accomplish His excellent purposes with faulty humans. But another interesting thing is that, while

He doesn't expect perfection, He does expect our best, and the more authority and responsibility God gives us, the more He expects of us.

Have someone read Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

This may seem unnecessarily harsh, but I God did it to show us that, as we learned from Peter Parker's uncle, "With great power comes great responsibility." Fortunately, God will not hold us all to the very high standards to which he held Moses, or none of us would get to the "Promised Land." Instead...

JESUS (God's perfect pattern)

Have someone read Hebrews 4:14-16.

Obviously, we can not live the sinless life that Jesus set before us as an example, but we can strive for it. It is in the process of striving for perfection that we find excellence. This is one of the beauties of the new covenant Jesus offers. We are no longer under the complicated, impossible-to-follow Old Testament covenant, but instead we can approach the throne of grace with confidence and expect mercy. However, even though Jesus will not give us "the look," like Jeff used to get from his folks, He still expects our best.

Have someone read Romans 12:1-2.

How can you be alive and also be a sacrifice?
What do you think Paul means by this?

Like Paul, we should share the good news of the gospel in whatever way God directs us. We need to live the life He has shown us so we can know "His good, pleasing, and perfect will." Then we must act on it with passion.

Have someone read 1 Corinthians 9:22-23.

Like Moses, as we work toward the unattainable perfection of God, we exhibit excellence through our striving, but unlike Moses, we can enter the Promised Land; we can get the crown.

CONCLUSION

Like Paul, we should forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.