

Walking in Prayer: Old Testament

Lesson 3: Prayers of Moses

Vocabulary:

unity	to release	plague	to trap
to mistreat (adj. mistreated)	cruelty	to yield	terrified
to enslave (n. slavery)	frustrated	wilderness	deliverance
qualified/underqualified	confused	at what point	to make possible
to resist (adj. resistant)	trouble (as in problem)	ancestral (line)	to drown
ability to handle	grief	persistence	to persevere (n. perseverance)
victorious	rejection (v. to reject)	to chase	confirmation

Discussion:

In Lesson 2, we learned from Jacob how to wrestle with God to receive our blessings, our identity, our direction, and our ability to trust him completely. Jacob showed us also how to wrestle with our relationships to grow in **unity** and peace.

Share one way that your life or relationship with God was impacted from the last lesson. In what ways do you still want to grow?

In this study, we will look at the life and prayers of Moses, the challenges he faced, and the character that God builds in the man that God has chosen to lead his people.

The Prayers of Moses (Exodus 4-15)

Moses's first experience with God is on Mount Horeb in Midian, modern day Saudi Arabia. God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush and tells Moses his deep concern for the Hebrew people who are being **mistreated** and **enslaved** by the Egyptians. God calls* Moses to go to the pharaoh (or Egyptian ruler), to ask Pharaoh to free the people from **slavery**, and to lead the people out of Egypt. Moses tells God he is not **qualified** for this task! The Egyptians won't listen to him, and his own people won't believe that he can help them! God then gives Moses the ability to perform miracles to *prove* to the people that God is leading him. Yet still, Moses replies, "Lord, please send someone else, to do it" (4:13, NIV), and he reminds God that he cannot even speak well. To help Moses with his speech, the Lord assigns Moses's brother Aaron to speak for Moses. Yet on the way to Egypt, Moses's attitude is so **resistant** toward God's plan that God actually wants to destroy Moses's son, just as God's people will be destroyed if Moses does not act. But Moses's wife prays for Moses, and the Lord spares his son's life.

* The verb "call" means to be assigned by God for a special task. The special task is often called a "calling." Example: He was called [by God] to become a doctor.

Do you ever feel **underqualified** for a job, role, or task that you know God has called you to do? Perhaps you are facing a difficult situation in your life that seems greater than your **ability to handle**. Explain.

Make a list of challenges that you feel are keeping you from being **victorious** in your task or situation. How do you feel about these challenges? Discuss.

Moses's task to free the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt is more challenging than he imagined. In fact, every time he goes to the pharaoh, asking that the people be released, Pharaoh rejects his request and punishes the Hebrew people with even greater cruelty. Frustrated and confused, Moses returns to God saying, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble on these people? Is this why you sent me?... You have not rescued your people at all" (5:22). The Lord then punishes Pharaoh over and over, but nothing changes, and again and again, Moses returns to God with questions and grief.

In the beginning of Moses's walk with God, he struggles with the tasks that God is giving him. How do you see Moses's honesty in his prayers to God?

On a scale of 1-10, how honest have you been with God about how you're feeling about the tasks or challenges you're facing? Discuss.

On a card, write a respectful prayer to God that expresses your true feelings.

While Pharaoh continues to reject Moses's requests to set the Jewish people free, God continues to confirm Moses as the one who will lead his people out of Egypt. As Moses obeys the Lord more and more, he begins to see the miracles that God promised to perform: God turns Moses's staff into a snake, he turns the water of the Nile into blood, and he sends plagues over Egypt to make Pharaoh yield to Moses's request. Through his obedience, Moses sees the faithfulness of his God, and he grows in strength and power. Moses begins speaking to Pharaoh more directly and boldly. Even when Pharaoh finally tells Moses that the Hebrew people are free to make sacrifices to their God *inside Egypt*, Moses replies, "That would not be right... We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, as he commands us" (8:27).

Even though Moses begs God to send someone else to save the Hebrew people and complains to God about all the troubles he is facing, God does not change his mind about using Moses. Why do you think God does this?

God also does not change his mind about saving the Hebrew people, even though Moses is facing many challenges. Why is the freedom of God's people so important? Why does he want them to leave Egypt?

Eventually, Moses's heart does change toward the calling that God has given him, and Moses begins experiencing God's miracles to help him be victorious. At what point does this happen and why?

Think about your situation. What would obedience in your situation look like for you? What would disobedience look like? On a scale of 1-10, where are you in your obedience? Explain.

What areas of your character do you think God is trying to grow in you through your situation? Why does your success in this task or situation matter?

God does not change his mind about using Moses because God knows that it is not Moses who will lead the people out of Egypt, but God himself will lead them through his power. He only needs Moses to

trust and obey the direction God will give him. God must bring his people out of Egypt because his plan for his people is freedom to worship him and to have a land of their own. It is in this land, and through many generations of Jewish people, that the Christ will be born, the Savior of the world. According to Old Testament prophecy, this man must be from the line of Abraham and the line of David.¹ Giving the people a land of their own would help to ensure that these **ancestral** lines would stay pure. Moses's obedience mattered, and he needed to trust God. God would surely be faithful in bring his people out of Egypt!

With Moses's obedience and **persistence**, Pharaoh finally releases the Hebrew people, but not without a fight. When the Hebrews flee Egypt, Pharaoh's army **chases** them and **traps** them in the desert by the Red Sea. The people are **terrified** and cry out to the Lord to save them. Once afraid and **filled with doubt**, Moses powerfully declares God's faithfulness to his people: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the **deliverance** the Lord will bring you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." (14:13-14). At this, the Lord places a cloud between the Hebrews and the Egyptians that creates darkness on the side of the Egyptians and light on the side of God's people. In this way, the Egyptians cannot see the people of God and the people of God can move forward without being seen. The Lord then tells Moses to raise his staff over the sea. When Moses raises his staff in obedience to God's command, the Lord parts the waters of the sea and sends a strong wind all night to dry the land, **making possible** their escape. When the cloud lifts and the Egyptians see the Hebrews escaping through the water, the Egyptians race into the sea. At that moment, the Lord releases the waves, **drowning** the entire Egyptian army.

How are Moses's prayers and character changing? How did this happen?

What do you notice about the people he is leading? How are they changing? How did this happen?

Through Moses's **perseverance** in honest prayers and obedience, despite the challenges and **rejection**, God answers Moses's prayers, and the Hebrew people escape oppression in Egypt. During this experience, they see miracles and experience God's faithfulness. God never takes away the trials Moses and his people face during the test, but we see that he gives Moses the power and strength to face these challenges boldly and overcome them with courage. Through Moses's faithful perseverance, the people he leads are also victorious. They too obey and cry out to the Lord for help.

Why did God make the test so difficult? Perhaps he was preparing Moses for what was ahead: leading God's people through the desert for forty years in order to reach the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This would be an even greater test than the one Moses faced with Pharaoh. God needed a strong leader to do his work, but the only way to find the man he needed was to choose that man and build his character through these challenges and tests. Moses was the man God had chosen; he just had to pray, **persevere**, and obey.

Consider your situation. How much time have you been spending praying about your situation?

Where do you need to grow in your obedience?

¹ Genesis 22:18 Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8-9

What is God trying to develop in your character through this challenge? Do you see yourself growing or resisting? Explain.

Through the trials Moses faces, he is transformed into a mighty man of God and the people he is leading are transformed too! When they finally reach the other side of the sea, they sing to the Lord with joy. Moses and his sister Miriam create a song to remind their children and future generations of their great God who rescued the Jewish people from slavery:

¹“I will sing to the Lord! He has done great things... ²The LORD is my strength. He saves me, and I sing songs of praise to him. He is my God, and I praise him. He is the God of my ancestors, and I honor him... ⁴He threw Pharaoh’s chariots and soldiers into the sea. Pharaoh’s very best soldiers drowned in the Red Sea. ⁵The deep water covered them, and they sank to the bottom like rocks. ⁶...They sank like lead into the deep sea...¹¹“Are there any gods like the LORD? No, there are no gods like you—you are wonderfully holy! You are amazingly powerful! You do great miracles!... ¹⁸“The Lord will rule forever and ever!” (15:1-18, ERV).

Take a minute to remember and write down the most special time when you experienced God’s blessing, his deliverance, or his love for you, your family, or your friends.

End this study with praying a prayer of thanks to God for this special time in your life. Remember his faithfulness as you pray also about the current challenge you are facing and consider the hope that his faithfulness gives you.

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Take some time out this week to pray honestly to God again about how you are feeling in your situation. Ask him for **confirmation** about your role and responsibilities.
2. Once God confirms your role, write on a card what obedience will look like. Set goals for yourself. Get advice from others, if needed. Pray over this card every week and ask God for help.
3. Reread what you wrote for the last two questions of this study. Using Moses and Miriam’s song, write your own song to the Lord about what he did for you. If you have musical talents, put your song to music and celebrate God’s goodness in your life.