

Leadership *and* Character

PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE



2018 *Youth & Young Adults*
Week of Prayer **SERMONS**





FOOD & WATER DRIVE

17TH | MARCH | 2018

YOUTH WEEK OF PRAYER

Theme: *Leadership*
17 - 24 March 2018

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24 March 2018
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BE THE
SERMON

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Leadership and Character

PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE *and their encounters with God*



2018 Youth & Young Adults
Week of Prayer SERMONS



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2018 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS YOUTH WEEK OF PRAYER SERMONS

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KEEPING IT REAL *by Maria Manderson*

When you have an encounter with Jesus you cannot keep it to yourself. You must tell your friends. Let's take a quick look at one such encounter where paths intersect:

Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed Him.

(Mark 2:13, 14)

Here we see Jesus and Levi (called Mark) meeting for a brief moment. The Bible does not say what they talked about, but we know they talked. Levi was sitting at his tax collector's booth and Jesus went and spoke with him. While the Bible does not tell us what they spoke about, we know it was enough to make Levi, the hustling tax collector, give up everything to follow Him. All He said was, "Follow me." And just like that Levi followed Him. But he does not keep it to himself. He threw Jesus a party. Yes, he did.

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:15-17)

Believe me, it is that simple.

You tell people about Jesus and they follow Him.

It is not complicated at all.

Real simple.

Once you live a life of holiness and follow Jesus, people will see it in you. They will want to follow you. But let's look a little closer at what Mark did. Not only did he throw Jesus a big party, he went out and invited all his friends to the party.

When you **ENCOUNTER JESUS** you cannot keep it to yourself. You must tell others about Him.

May this Week of Prayer and spiritual emphasis, be more than just another week for you. May you feel a burden and passion to invite others to meet Jesus. Invite them to have an encounter with Him.

Will you follow Mark's example today?

Invite your family, friends, associates to meet Jesus. He is waiting for them.

<<**Read about the encounter in Mark 2:13-17**>>



EDITORIAL *by Maria Manderson*

We are at a crossroad in our lives. We need the Lord more than ever. As we read the stories of these biblical characters let us ask God to help us examine our own characters. Let us come to God like Jacob did...wrestle with God until He blesses you.

Speaking of Jacob, God took him on a very interesting journey to work on his character; to show that He can take a crooked character and make it straight. Jacob stole his twin brother Esau's birthright, and when Esau found out Jacob had to run away from home. He ran away to his uncle Laban, fell in love with his daughter Rachael and had to work seven years to get her as his wife. The morning after the wedding he discovered that he was tricked, he had married the older sister Leah. He had to work an additional seven years for Rachael, a total of 14 years for the two wives. He spent a total of 20 years in Laban's house, and during those 20 years God was able to work on his character. He had to be molded like the clay in the potter's hand. He had to seek God privately for himself. (*Read about this story in Genesis*). Even after God makes a covenant with us we cannot guarantee how he is going to work on our character. That's for God to choose, not us.

Use this week to begin the change in your life. He wants us to draw closer to Him, to be our everything. That's what he wants...an intimate, abiding relationship with you.

Let us put away pride, arrogance, self-sufficiency, and indifference...God resists the proud. Does that mean He no longer loves us? No, He still loves us, but the Bible says pride will always make God pull back from us. [*Read James 4:6 and Psalm 138:6*]

Lord we know that you left heaven and came down for the needy and broken hearted, and today we come to you broken and desperate. We want to serve you. We want to love you EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY. We want to praise you everyday. Help us Jesus. Help us to appreciate your sacrifice.

We cannot change our lives Lord, but you can. Please help us recognize our great need of you and praise you with our whole heart.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free. (Luke 4:18, *New International Version*)

KEEPING IT REAL *by Maria Manderson*

Jesus goes out of the way to meet people. Yes, He meets us exactly where we are.

When you have an encounter with Jesus you cannot keep it to yourself. You must tell your friends. Let's take a quick look at another such encounter....where paths intersect:

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) (John 4:4-8)

In this encounter, we see Jesus going out of His way to meet the lady at the well. How often do we read of Jesus being tired. But Jesus was sitting at the well waiting just for this moment. Here it is again, just like the encounter with Mark, (see page 8) we see Jesus having a conversation. This time however, the Bible gives us an insight into the conversation:

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (John 4:9)

Believe me, it is that simple. Just tell people the truth about the *living water* and what it can do for them. It is not that complicated. Real simple. Tell them the truth about sin, but do not embarrass them. Start a conversation, let them see that what they are doing is wrong. Do not be rude. Look at how sensitive Jesus was to this woman's situation:

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. (John 4:16-19)

When you **ENCOUNTER JESUS** you leave everything and follow Him.

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. (John 4:28-30)

We do not know her name, but she brought many to Jesus.

May this Week of Prayer and Spiritual Emphasis, be more than just another week for you. May you feel a burden and passion to invite others to meet Jesus. Invite them to have an encounter with Him.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. (John 4: 39-41)

Read about this encounter in John 4:1-42

READ THIS FIRST

Commit Your Prayer Warriors. Get a team of adults together who will commit to praying for you and your ministry on a regular basis. Make sure this is a group with whom you can confidentially share both your personal and ministry prayer needs.

Choose a Theme Song. Involve your youth choir. If your church does not have a youth choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening, or choose a song for the entire week.

Start a Prayer Journal. Nothing is greater for your personal spiritual growth than time spent in prayer. Your youth group will grow as you grow. Prayer journaling will help you encounter God in new and exciting ways. You will be able to "track" your walk with God as you go back and review answered prayers and see how He has lead you step by step each day. New, fresh ideas will come to mind as you spend time in His presence journaling your prayers. You can find many ideas online on starting and keeping a prayer journal. Just go to www.google.com and type in the words "starting a prayer journal."

Plan Your Homecoming/Baptism Celebration. A baptism is a great opportunity to celebrate with friends and family...so plan a great after-party and invite family and friends of all those who are getting baptized. Get people to donate time, goods, and money. Have everyone pitch-in to help prepare for the day. Encourage baptismal candidates to invite friends and family members. Arrange for someone to do a great *Homecoming Cake*, or do cupcakes with a theme.... that's always a fun thing to do.

Start Your Planning Now. We know that leadership sometimes changes at the end of the year, but please, if you will no longer be the AY leader next year, do not let that stop you from planning for this special week. Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.

Form a Development/Review Team. Depending on the size of your church, this group can be four to eight persons who will go through all eight sermons with you. Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, your pastor(s), etc.); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assistant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least three weeks—at least one week for four lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.

Integrate Global Youth Day (GYD) into Your Week of Prayer Plans.

Ideally, GYD should be a time to teach youth how to sacrificially give of themselves by providing opportunities in the church and the community. If you are a small youth group and do not have the resources to arrange a community-based GYD event, you can use this opportunity to break down denominational barriers in the area by partnering with and pooling resources and ideas with other youth groups from other churches in your area. For more information on organizing a GYD program, please visit our website, www.youth.adventist.org.

SMALL GROUP COVENANT (SGC) GUIDELINES

The purpose of a small group is to create a safe place where every member can be themselves, wrestle with questions regarding their faith, be supported and encouraged in their walk with God, support one another in prayer and worship together so that group members glorify and honor God through their lives, individually and as a group.

Below are some guidelines to consider when creating a covenant for your youth group.

- Duration** of the meeting (how long will the meeting be)
- Time** and frequency of the meetings is set by church or youth leader.
- Location:** Will the meetings be at the church, someone's house, or be on rotation?
- Mission and Service:** We will serve the church and the community by encouraging the mutual discovery and application of talents and gifts so that group members embrace and serve people in families, their small groups, schools, churches, and community. Engaging in service is a way of learning together as well as giving.
- Growth and development:** "We will develop and grow by..."
- Participation:** There are no "dumb questions." Everyone is given the right to their own opinion and all comments are encouraged and respected.
- Spiritual growth:** We will endeavor to grow in mutual submission and in the application of spiritual truth, so that as a group, and individually, we can become more like Jesus in attitude and behavior.
- Confidentiality:** Anything of a personal nature that is said in the meeting is not repeated outside the meeting.
- Openness:** As we are able, we will be honest and forthright with one another. Non-judgment zone!
- Accountability:** We give each other permission to hold each other accountable for the goals we set as a group or our personal pledges (you may want to document accountability pledges in a log book).
- Graciousness:** We will not speak about a person when he or she is not present.
- Courtesy:** When the group meets, we will come on time.
- Relationship-building:** We will be honest and open with each other and pray for one another between meetings.
- Community:** We will commit to join the global church in repositioning mission at the very heart of who we are and what we stand for as Christians (depending on what your acts of kindness were, you can use this time to debrief after the Global Youth Day event).
- Roles and Responsibilities.** We will seek to share the following roles and responsibilities: Leader, co-leader, subgroup leaders (depending on the size of the group/church), host/hostess, prayer coordinator, Global Youth Day service project coordinator (you will need this if you will be using the Global Youth Day to launch your Youth Week of Prayer).



Our Small Group Covenant

I agree that this group exists as a safe place for me to be myself, wrestle with questions regarding my faith, and receive support and encouragement in my walk with God.

I AGREE TO:

1. Support the members of my group in prayer and worship together so that we can all glorify and honor God through our lives.
2. Attend each small group meeting if at all possible, and, should I not be able to attend, to let the leader know in advance.
3. While not expecting or promising strict confidentiality within this group, I promise to be sensitive to the privacy needs of others and to be respectful of group members when speaking to others about what is said here.
4. Pray regularly for my fellow group members.
5. Be respectful of everyone's opinion. All questions will be encouraged and respected.
6. Keep my advice to the minimum.
7. Participate openly and honestly in group sessions and leave room for all members to share.
8. Not speak about group members when they are not present.
9. Do everything I can to support the global church in its mission to the world.

MAKING SMALL GROUPS WORK

In this book are eight outstanding messages on leadership and character. Throughout these readings you will find opportunities to see encounters with God how different people react to different situations. Where possible, when you are “preaching” a sermon, insert a personal story—that will give you a chance to show that what you are talking about is real and personal, not just something theoretical from Scripture.

To encourage interaction we have included discussion questions to be used at the end of each day’s reading. These discussion questions are very important in the process of each person adapting and applying the lesson to their daily lives. They can be done together as a large group, or you can break down into smaller groups of 10-15; however, we are suggesting that you break into small, core groups of three to five persons and get together in these same small groups each night. Please remember that no two small groups will be the same. Each will have its own dynamic character, reflecting the varying characteristics of the members. The common thread running through the entire group will be Jesus Christ, and it is in His name that the group will meet each night of this special week.

Avoid the “Christianese” and theological terms. Stick to language young people will understand. Always remember: this week and all the discussion will mean nothing to them if they don’t understand what you are saying.

So what is a Small Group Covenant (SGC)?

A Small Group Covenant is a set of promises about behavior to help foster a safe environment for spiritual exploration and provide relational ground rules. It is a very good way to help your groups affirm and remember their commonality. Creating a covenant together as a group will require that the members consciously and intentionally commit to growing with each other as Christians and will help in keeping the group healthy and focused.

Guidelines for creating a small group covenant can be found on the next page. Please feel free to make as many copies of needed of the sample covenant on page 15.

As you create your small group, keep in mind that churches are different and what may work for another church may not necessarily work for your church or youth group. Some groups may want to do a formal covenant that is typed and given to each member to sign and keep. Or you may choose to do an informal covenant such as a verbal agreement that you review orally when there are new members.

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Global Youth Day

Global Youth Day is set to launch the official week of the Youth Week of Prayer meetings. **Ahead of time, please contact your pastor or conference youth leader to see what projects your church will be involved in on this day, March 18.** After the Global Youth Day event, on the first night of your meetings, you may want to take some time to discuss or talk about the events that you just participated in.



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DAY 1 7 Characteristics of a Godly Leader

One of the greatest leaders of all times was a man named Joshua who courageously led the Nation of Israel into the hostile realm of Canaan and defeated seven Nations (Acts 13:19). We can learn at least seven characteristics of a godly leader from this great man.

#1: Godly Leaders Get Scared

Once there was a great chief who wanted to find a husband for his daughter so he invited all the single warriors of the tribe to a competition. He then had a giant pool built and filled it with the most dangerous water creatures---electric eels, piranhas, crocodiles, sharks (you get the idea). When the warriors arrived, the chief promised that the first brave man to make it across the pool alive would receive his daughter’s hand in marriage and become the next chief of the tribe! Before he could finish his speech, a young brave man was in the water, swimming rapidly if not frantically for the other side. When he arrived, the king gave him a giant hug and said, “Congratulations my son, you have won my daughters hand in marriage and secured for yourself the position of future chief.” He then asked if the young man had any words for his fellow warriors. “Yes” he said while catching his breath, “I want to know who pushed me in!”

Ever been asked by God to do something that terrified you? Preach a sermon, lead a Bible study, share your faith, join a ministry, accept a leadership position, go on a mission trip, give sacrificially to a cause, speak up for someone, stand for the right or resist temptation, etc. Maybe you feel like the young brave man in our story. Perhaps you feel like you are surrounded by dangers, challenges and fears! Maybe you even wonder if God played a prank and pushed you in.

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Joshua, one of the greatest leaders in the Bible, was apparently terrified when he heard that Moses was dead and God had chosen him to become the new leader of Israel. In fact, four times in the first chapter of Joshua and approximately ten times in the entire book, he is commanded by God and encouraged by his fellow Israelites to “be strong and very courageous.”

I have found through the years that this is how the Lord works! When he calls a man or woman, boy or girl to something, it is almost always a challenge and always requires a new level of strength and courage. He does this so we might rely on Him, and as long as we do we have nothing and no one to fear. In fact, notice what he says to Joshua in chapter one “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life...” (5).

When I was sixteen years old and living in Midlothian, Texas I distinctly heard God call me to be a pastor. This was the first and last time I heard God audibly. Usually He speaks to me through impressions, convictions and gentle nudging. Anyway, the thought of preaching terrified me and I spent the next few years majoring in every other degree but theology. Finally, my junior year at Southern University I submitted to God’s call and changed my major to Religion hoping I would never get a call to preach. You guessed it...within a few days, I was invited to speak at a Korean Church that was meeting on the campus. I was so nervous that I sped read through my sermon while my leg nervously bounced up and down the entire time. But when I was finished something beautiful happened. The dear people of that church invited me to potluck and then continuously thanked me for the message (maybe because it was so short). They also invited me to come back which I was never able to do but I’ve never forgotten their kindness. I will be forever grateful for how they treated me during my scary first sermon.

#2: Godly Leaders Are Needy

Someone once said, “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.” One of the great privileges of being a leader is intimacy with Jesus. When Joshua approached the city of Jericho, no doubt wondering how he was going to conquer that great city, Jesus appeared to him as the “Commander of the army of the Lord” and it was during this intimate encounter that Joshua received the simple, yet supernatural strategy, for taking the city. Being called to lead is really a call to walk closely with God. It’s a call to be dependent on him...to realize we are needy. Joshua’s greatest successes and greatest failures throughout the book of Joshua are the result of either depending on God or depending on man. Ironically, we are never more qualified to lead than when we feel our desperate need of divine help.

Perhaps you’ve heard the story of the moped and Harley race. A biker pulled up beside an old man on a moped and jokingly asked if he wanted to race. The old man said “sure.” When the light turned green the biker roared off smiling to himself as he thought about the old man coughing up his exhaust. Then to his horror he noticed that the old man on the moped was catching up and within seconds had slammed into his Harley and they both wrecked. The biker was upset that his Harley was

damaged but even more shaken by the reality that the old man had caught up with him. “How did you do that?” He asked. The old man visibly shaken replied, “please untie my suspenders from your handlebars.” We too can do amazing things as Leaders and even put fear in Satan’s heart if we keep connected and reliant on God.

Joshua was indeed a man of God but he made some big mistakes. Like the rest of us, he had a tendency to rely on human strength and wisdom rather than maintaining a humble dependence on God for guidance. Although he sought God for a strategy to destroy Jericho, he did not at first seek God in regard to the city of Ai or when the nation of Gibeon deceived him into thinking they were from a distant country rather than from a neighboring city. The Bible says Joshua and his leaders “did not ask counsel of the Lord” (Joshua 9:14). Ironically, success can be its own failure, if we allow it to rob us of daily dependence on God. I think it was Martin Luther who said, “I was so busy today I had to spend three hours in prayer.” Thankfully Joshua grew to understand that his success as a leader was entirely dependent on The Lord.

#3: Godly Leaders Are Armed

Thankfully God does not send his leaders without a promise! Joshua came armed with a wonderful promise from God. “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (1:5). The wonderful thing about God is that he always keeps his promises. He is the ultimate Promise Keeper. In fact, the Bible says it’s “impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). So, if He makes a promise He stands behind it. Toward the end of his life Joshua used these beautiful words to describe God and his faithfulness. “Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass” (Joshua 21:45). The longer we live and serve Him, the more we too should be able to testify of His faithfulness!

I have been an Adventist Pastor for over twenty years now and in all that time God has never failed to give me a message to preach. Granted they often come hours if not minutes before but they always come. Someone once said, “God is never late and never early, he is always on time.” Like Joshua, I too can testify that God is faithful to perform what He has promised!

As leaders in our homes, churches, clubs and communities we should collect the promises of God, claim them, and confidently expect God to fulfill them in His time. Beware though, Satan who is always trying to find fault will tempt you to disqualify yourself from God’s promises. He will tell you that you are unworthy or that you have not fulfilled the conditions of the promise. So, let me give you a verse that has helped me deflect those arrows of unbelief. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says “For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” In other words, in Jesus we have already fulfilled the conditions of every promise ever given by God. God will always say “yes” to fulfilling them not because of our merits but because of the merits and righteousness of our precious Savior and Lord Jesus. So instead of looking to ourselves, we should look to Christ and arm ourselves with the sure promises of Almighty God.

#4: Godly Leaders Are Followers

Like Joshua, godly leaders follow the Lord in loving obedience. Many years ago, a group of missionaries were considering whether or not they should start gospel work in a particular part of the country which was considered resistant and even dangerous to Christians. They noticed that a former military general was nearby and decided to consult with him. “What should we do sir?” they asked. He looked up from his study, smiled and asked, “What are your orders?”

Few leaders have ever been ordered to take on more danger than Joshua. First, he was being asked to lead a nation that historically did not treat its leaders well (for example Joseph, Moses, God). They grumbled, complained, disobeyed and even tried to assassinate one of them. (Numbers 14:10) Second, he was being sent to conquer a land filled with giants and impregnable cities. No wonder he was in need of courage.

The command God gave Joshua is very similar to the command He has given His church in the last days (you and I). We too are given the command to conquer this world—not with a steel sword but with the sword of the gospel. In other words, we are to preach the good news of Jesus to “every nation, kindred, tongue and people” and teach them how to be His disciples (Mark 16:15,

Revelation 14:6, Matthew 28:19-20). I have personally found that the more we share the grace of God, His unmerited and undeserved kindness, the more people begin to experience victory over sin. The Bible confirms this in Romans 6:14 “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” The same book of the Bible says, that it’s “...the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

The great commission God has given the church is no less challenging than the one given to Joshua. Danger is very real for us as well and getting worse every year! Just today I learned of two Seventh-day Adventists who were imprisoned and are now awaiting trial in a gospel hostile country. Yes, all around us are the intimidating giants of paganism, atheism, Satanism, agnosticism, secularism, humanism, liberalism, conservatism, traditionalism, laodiceanism and the list goes on. But unlike those missionaries mentioned above we must not consult with our fears but with God’s commands. God is well able to protect and open doors for the gospel in places considered by humans to be unreachable. Who would have thought there was a Rahab in Jericho? Or who would have thought the entire city of Nineveh would repent at the preaching of Jonah?

If I had a dollar for every definition I’ve heard on what a disciple is, I’d be at least \$100 dollars richer. Phrases like “fully functional follower of Jesus” or “one who is covered in the dust of the master” and the list of flowery definitions goes on. But what does the Bible say? Jesus said that a true disciple is one who obeys “everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). It may not be flowery but according to Jesus a true disciple and leader is one who follows Jesus in complete obedience to what He taught. Ellen White puts it like this “Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship” (*Steps to Christ* p. 62).

The most courageous thing a godly leader can do is follow God in obedience. In an era of compromise or “Name only” half-baked Christianity a leader who obeys God really stands out, and in many cases, becomes a target for unkind and even harsh treatment. No wonder God connects courage with obedience to His Law when He says to Joshua “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7). In other words, it takes courage to live obediently to God. As Christian leaders, we should not fall into the pit of conservatism (“right”) or liberalism (“left”) but should walk straight and true on the road marked “thus says the Lord.” People have asked me, “are you liberal or conservative?” I like to reply, “Neither, I want to be biblical.”

It’s important to remember that Jesus is not necessarily on our side. Yes, you read that right! When Joshua met Jesus the commander of God’s armies, He asked him “Are you for us or our adversaries,” it’s very eye opening to read how Jesus responded. He said, “No but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come” (5:13-14). In other words, Jesus is on His Father side and therefore only on the side of those who follow God.

Many are wondering where are God’s miracles today? Some have even built a theology around the idea that supernatural things don’t happen anymore or they just live like that’s true. But this cannot be! Jesus is alive, He has all authority and still cares deeply for His people. Miracles do happen but only when our feet touch the Jordan River. Remember it wasn’t until the feet of the obedient priests touched the Jordan river that the water parted! (Joshua 3:15). Conversely, it’s when we move forward in obedience to God’s call that supernatural things happen. Mountains become molehills and monsters become mice. Joshua experienced the following miracles as he faithfully followed the Lord!

- The swollen Jordan river parted
- The mighty walls of Jericho fell
- The sun and moon miraculously stood still
- Canaan was conquered
- He was changed!

Perhaps the greatest miracle in the book of Joshua was the miracle that took place in Joshua himself. The same guy that trembled in fear when asked to lead Israel became an encourager to others! Notice how Joshua addresses his fellow Israelites in Joshua 10:25 “...Do not be afraid nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.”

#5: Godly Leaders Are Young (Often)

What concerns me more than the “emerging church” is the “submerging church.” A church that, like Jonah—is called to take the gospel into the dangerous cities of the world but instead submerges—like Jonah, down to Joppa, down into the ship, down into the belly of whale and down into the sea. I believe this generation of young people would love to stop submerging and start emerging into the cities of the world with the Three Angels Message.

Now I know that Joshua was older (perhaps in his eighties) but many of his leaders were young! Did you know that those God allowed to conquer the land of Canaan were comprised of younger people? You will remember that the generation before them (their parents and grandparents) had refused to trust God and invade the promised land. Because of this they were sent to wander and die in the wilderness (Joshua 5:4-5). In other words, a younger generation stood up in the time of Joshua to finish the work. If this isn't a clear call to Seventh-day Adventist young people around the world to get involved in gospel conquest, I don't know what is.

Have you ever noticed in Psalms 127:4 that young people are described as "arrows in the hands of a warrior?" In other words, like arrows they were not designed to rot in the archer's quiver, they were designed to fly focused and fearlessly into the enemy's front lines. If you ask me what makes a successful youth leader? I would say it is not how many arrows you have sitting in your programs, events and services, but how many of you have sent "rightly trained" into the harvest field to wreak havoc on the kingdom of darkness and built up the kingdom of God.

Think about it, when Jesus returns and the Great Controversy is over, do you want God to find you with a quiver full of arrows or an empty one? One author put it like this, "It's not your seating capacity but your sending capacity" that makes you an effective youth leader, pathfinder director, Sabbath School teacher, educator, AY coordinator or parent. All around the world we need to launch our young people through initiatives like MISSION CALEB, 1000 MISSIONARY MOVEMENT and ONE YEAR IN MISSION projects (learn more at gcyouthministries.org). I personally believe that the 10/40 window needs to become our target as a church since most of the people living in that part of the world have never heard the gospel. Also, consider this, in Matthew 24:14 Jesus promised to come back only after the gospel goes to the whole world. So, the 10/40 window may be what stands before us and the second coming!

#6: Godly Leaders Will Succeed

Someone rightfully said, "I have read the end of the Bible and we win!" But we do not need to wait for the second coming of Jesus to experience success in ministry. If we will go where God sends us, serve the way He says we should, we will experience success even in places that are considered closed to spiritual things. One of my favorite verses in the book of Joshua is chapter 23 verse 10 which says "One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you."

Pastor Mark Finley tells an amazing story of a woman who was traveling through a country known to be resistant to religion. She was carrying a box of 50 Great Controversies when she was stopped by a traffic jam. It was so bad that people were getting out of their cars to stretch and chat with perfect strangers. A young man noticed she was reading her Sabbath School Lesson to fill the time and asked what she was learning. She began to tell him about the second coming of Jesus and last day events. He was very interested so she offered him a Great Controversy book before he went back to his car. A few minutes later the man's wife came and asked for a

copy of the book. The woman gave her a copy and they too began to discuss the second coming of Jesus. Soon others trapped in the traffic jam began to gather around to listen and she was able to share the gospel and end time events with them all. When they went back to their cars they took all but three of her Great Controversies. Suddenly a helicopter flew overhead and landed in a field nearby. The pilot ran over to her and asked what was going on. They had noticed on radar a large group of people gathering in one place. So, she began to tell them about Jesus and his soon coming. She then gave him a Great Controversy but before he went back to the helicopter he asked if he could have two more for the guys who were with him. Humans may say it's impossible to reach certain people in certain places, but Jesus says "The harvest is truly plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

#7: Godly Leaders Uplift Jesus

It's not a coincidence that the book of Joshua is filled with pointers to Christ. These pointers hint of Jesus and His work as our Redeemer. When we read these pointers, we should be reminded that our ultimate responsibility as godly leaders is to lead others to Jesus and teach them how to be His disciples. Here are just a few of the pointers found in the book of Joshua.

- 1. Pointer One:** Joshua himself! In fact, the name Joshua is the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek name Jesus! And like Joshua, Jesus leads His people into the promised land and gives them rest from their enemies.
- 2. Pointer Two:** The Scarlet Cord that Rahab hung outside her window (2:18) reminds us of the scarlet blood of Jesus that also saves us when we put our trust in Him.
- 3. Pointer Three:** According to Ellen White, the "Commander of the Army of the Lord" that met Joshua outside of Jericho was actually Jesus! (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 487, 488)
- 4. Pointer Four:** The Cities of Refuge were places that people who were falsely accused of murder could run for safety. Jesus is our city of refuge and we can run to Him even though we are guilty and we will find forgiveness and deliverance.
- 5. Pointer Five:** The Ram's Horn is definitely a symbol of the Cross of Christ. In order to produce a Ram's horn, a ram must die. Jesus is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It's interesting that it was the blowing of the ram's horn that brought down the walls of Jericho. If we want to successfully reach the cities of the world and see the walls of satanic resistance come down, we too must loudly declare "The Lord's death until He comes."

So, there you have it! Seven characteristics of a godly leader! As you study the lives of great men and women like Joshua, and as you daily seek God's wisdom and strength may you also become known as a godly leader.

APPEAL

Young people, God is calling you to be a leader like Joshua! You might be thinking to yourself “no way! I am no leader,” but did you know that’s exactly how most of the great leaders in the Bible reacted? For example, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Solomon and of course Joshua.

Think about it, to various degrees all of us are leaders. That’s right! Like it or not you have followers. I’m not just talking about followers on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Day in and day out you are being observed by siblings, children, colleagues, employees, employers, educators, relatives, believers, non-believers and even people you don’t know.

So, I appeal to you to accept the high calling God has given you to lead and remember he is saying to you what he said to Joshua hundreds of years ago “As I was with Moses, I will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

So right now, I challenge you to stand to your feet and accept the high calling God has placed on you to be a godly leader. And never forget...

- Godly leaders get scared
- Godly leaders are needy
- Godly leaders are armed
- Godly leaders are followers
- Godly leaders are young (often)
- Godly leaders will succeed
- Godly leaders uplift Jesus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Joshua, along with Caleb, were the only two spies to bring back a good report (see Numbers 14:6-8). Having faith in God will help us see beyond the obvious. How important are the opinions of others to you? Are you a person who follows the crowd, or can you reason things out and make decisions independently of others?
2. When you get home read the story of the wall of Jericho in Joshua 5 and 6. Why do you think Joshua was able to stand for the right, even though what God told him to do seemed silly?
3. The writer of this sermon was 16 years old when he heard God calling him to be a pastor. Do you know how to recognize the voice of God speaking to you? Pray and ask God to open your heart and mind to his calling in your life. Ask him to give you the power of discernment.
4. Throughout the story of Joshua, the Bible is always saying “God spoke to Joshua”. This type of relationship comes by obedience. How easy or difficult is it for you to obey God 100% of the time?



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DAY 2

The Boy Samuel... an Unlikely Leader

In the world of team sports, the question often asked is can one person make a difference in the performance of a team? While it is true that the outcome of a game generally depends on the overall team performance, it would be equally true to say that there are some super players who are known to have led their teams and nation to final victory. There are names like Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Michael Jordan, Coby Bryant, Lionel Messi, Paul Pogba, and Neymar da Silva Santos.

The same applies to politics when it comes to making a difference in the destiny of a whole nation; we can think of individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela.

In the same way, when you look at the history of God’s people in the scriptures, you also come face to face with leaders who have championed the cause of God; however there is a major fundamental difference. In the world of sports or politics, you must be a leader with superstar abilities to make a difference; but it is almost humorous that God delights in using unlikely people, people we would never even have thought of.

God is looking for a leader to give birth to a nation who will be as numerous as sand on the shores of the sea; we would choose a young man in the prime of life; but God chooses a man who is 99 years of age and the Bible tells us that his body was as good as dead (Hebrews 11:12).

God is looking for a leader to face up to a giant who is terrorizing the nation of Israel; all the experienced warriors as well as the king are in hiding. God calls a young man, who is not even of age to be a soldier – the shepherd boy steps up with his sling and stones to deliver the nation.

God, after the resurrection, is looking for a group of leaders to whom he will entrust a message that will determine the destiny of humanity; He chooses a bunch of ‘unschooled and ordinary men’ (Acts 4:13).

God is looking for a leader to take the Gospel message to the entire Gentile world. He chooses the archenemy of Christians, who presided over the brutal execution of Steven the first martyr, and launched a campaign to destroy the church. On the road to Damascus God dramatically appears to Saul, turns his life around and Saul the murderer turns out to be an evangelist.

- If you think that you are too old; think of Abraham;
- If you think you are too young; think of David;
- If you think that you are not talented enough; think of the first disciples;
- If you think that you do not even care; think of Saul.

The God who delights in using unlikely people has an appointment with you, right now. God would delight to use you to make a difference for He says *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Let us turn our attention to one of the most unlikely leaders we encounter in the scriptures who stepped up to make a difference in the most difficult of circumstances.

CONSIDER SAMUEL – Please open the scriptures and we shall examine closely 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

1 Samuel 3:1a: ***The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.***

Notice that it says ‘The boy Samuel’, not just Samuel. In fact, until that point in his story, every time he is referred to, he is called ‘boy’.

- 1 Samuel 2:11 – *“the boy ministered”*
- 1 Samuel 2:18 – *“a boy wearing a linen ephod”*
- 1 Samuel 2:21 – *“the boy Samuel grew up”*
- 1 Samuel 2:26 – *“and the boy Samuel”*

Repetition is a literary device used for the purpose of emphasis; the author is focusing our attention toward Samuel’s youth. He is only a young child, growing up and serving in a world of adults. He is a vulnerable young child living away from his parents – he is someone of no great significance.

CIRCUMSTANCES: Then we are introduced to the circumstances in which this ‘boy’ was acquiring his leadership training:

1 Samuel 3:1b

In those days the Word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

Notice that it does not say that there were no temple services, no priest, no sacrifice or any activity related to the temple; it seems that all the daily functions associated with temple services were in progress as usual, BUT with a big difference – “the Word of the Lord was rare” – God was not revealing himself – God was almost absent – God had gone into silence.

The Bible says, *“Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets”* (Amos 3:7) and *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”* (Proverbs 29:18).

The boy Samuel was being trained in spiritual leadership, but the ultimate trainer, God himself was hardly there; which leads us to a sobering reality, namely...

It is possible to do church without God.

There is a sobering truth being underlined here: it is possible to do church without God. It is possible to go through the motions of religion in the absence of God – both corporately and personally. It is possible to have an appearance of godliness, while denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5).

The fact that God would choose to stay away from His people was very strange indeed. It is strange that God would distance himself from His people; God is love and love means being together because love does not tolerate separation or distance.

The story of the Bible is the story of a God who is intensely in love with the ones he created and throughout history he has taken decisive and defining steps to draw closer to us, until our final reunion.

1. When our first parents sinned, God went looking for them: Where are you? (Genesis 3:9).
2. When Israel was on the way to the promise land God commanded Moses to have the people make Him a sanctuary for His wish was to “dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).
3. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son into the world and He was called Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23).
4. One of the favorite pictures we have of God is in the parables of the lost coin, lost sheep and the lost son, where he never stops looking until that which is lost is found and is reunited with the owner (Luke 15).
5. God’s ultimate desire and plan is to live with us forever (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-4).

I am sure that you could share an experience in your own ‘love story’ about how you always craved to be with the one you love.

But the question remains: why would a God who is so consumed with love for us, who always want to be with us, want to stay away from his people in the days of Samuel? Why was the word of the Lord rare?

Persistence in defiant disobedience to God can reduce his voice to silence.

Isaiah 9:1 & 2: *“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear, But your iniquities have separated you from God, your sins have hidden His face from you.”*

We are not referring here to mistakes that we all make in our journey with God; it is not God's will that we should stumble and fall from time to time; but if we do and we confess, he stands ready to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). We all stand in the God's grace for the past, present and future, until we see him face to face.

But we are here referring to persistent and deliberate defiance to God.

CONSIDER THE COURSE OF ACTION OF ELI'S SONS, WHO WERE PRIESTS AND MENTORS TO THE BOY SAMUEL.

A. 1 Samuel 3: 12, 17.

verse 12: *"Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord."*

verse 17: *"The sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt."*

Take the time to read verses 12-17 to understand how they offended God by making the sacred contemptible.

B. 1 Samuel 2:22.

"Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting."

Not only had they chosen to live an immoral life, but they had introduced elements of pagan worship, cultic prostitution, in the worship of the God of heaven. This had become the practice and the most Holy God was so offended that He was gradually withdrawing. His word had become rare.

These were the circumstances in which this 'boy' Samuel was ministering before the Lord.

- Will he hold on or will he disengage?
- Will he leave the church when he comes of age?
- Will he quit?
- Will he become like Eli's sons, his so-called mentors?
- How will he survive without being discouraged?
- How will a leader emerge from these dire circumstances?

In many parts of the world the word 'disengagement' is probably the most commonly used word in reference to the youth of the church today. We hear of youth leaving the church in alarming proportions and this concern is on the agenda of most leaders at all levels of church leadership.

One of the most cited reasons for youth disengagement is precisely the dissonance between what is taught and what is practiced, between what we say and what we do. Young people are looking to be inspired by genuineness and integrity, love and compassion, but often these basic Christian virtues go begging. This was the case in the days of the 'boy Samuel'. How will we respond?

FOLLOW THE BOY SAMUEL, THE EMERGING LEADER, VERY CLOSELY; PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS.

1 Samuel 3:2

"One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place."

Pay close attention to the carefully chosen words – **"night," "eyes becoming weak," "barely see"** – it is a picture of darkness that is gradually creeping in. Eli is the spiritual leader and his light was dimming dramatically, about to be snuffed out; and what is Eli doing in this defining moment?

He is sleeping in his usual place. He seems to have given up; he had come to accept what was happening around him as usual.

THEN in contrast, we are introduced to a two-part picture of hope that actually becomes the turning point of the story.

1 Samuel 3:3

"The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark was."

1. The lamp of God had not yet gone out.

The lamp of God was on the way out, but had not yet gone out. This lamp was the perpetual light that represented the presence of God near the ark; that lamp was never supposed to go out (Leviticus 24:1-4). It was to be kept 'burning continually': "from evening till morning continually"; "This is to be a lasting ordinance." Even that lamp was running the risk of being snuffed out, because God was considering withdrawing completely from the people, but there was still hope, because it had not yet gone out. It was still the time of God's patience and forbearance.

2. Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

Eli, the high priest is sleeping in his usual place; there is no particular description of that usual place, precisely because it was his usual place, his familiar place. In other words, he was doing something that he usually

did. On the other, by contrast, the writer goes into great details to point out precisely where the ‘boy Samuel’ was sleeping; he was lying down, in the temple, where the ark of God was. This place was the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 26: 33-34). This is where God met with the High Priest to give instructions for the people – “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands, for the Israelites.” (Leviticus 25:22). This was no bedroom; and Samuel was no High Priest; he was just a boy. Why wasn’t he sleeping in his usual place like everybody else? He was just a young boy after a long day’s exertion; he should be earning his well-deserved rest after all.

Why was he lying down near the ark of the testimony?

It was a time when the Word of the Lord was rare; when there were not many visions. The Ark was the place for God’s manifestation. Samuel must have reasoned that if God was to speak again, if he was to break silence, he would do so near the ark, it would be near the Ark, and that’s where Samuel wanted to be.

He was so desperate to hear God that he went to sleep near the ark – he made an appointment with God.

Samuel refused to settle for this godless, repetitious, meaningless, and lifeless religion – HE DID NOT QUIT, but simply refused to settle for that.

This is the secret of true leadership; it is not quitting, but it is refusing to settle for the status quo; it is to seek God and take to Him your dream, your hope and your expectation of a better future.

How did he know things could be different?

Simply because his mother Hannah had told him about the story of his birth. Hannah could not bear children. She came to the temple and poured her heart out to God and promised if she was given a child, she would dedicate him to the service of God. God heard her prayer and Samuel was born. Samuel grew up to believe that God is real, He hears and responds, He reveals, He guides...but that God had gone into silence.

Samuel knew that things could be different; he wanted to see the real thing. He slept near the Ark and he said to himself that if God ever speaks, it will be near the Ark and when He speaks, I want to be there.

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Another secret of true leadership is that there is more to religion than what you see around you. Don’t let your immediate environment settle your picture of God and your picture of the church.

Do not get your picture of God or church simply by what you see around you. It might not be the true picture. Samuel got a better picture from Hannah. You can get your picture from the Word of God. Consider the first picture of the church that we are given in Acts 2:42-47, the church born out of Pentecostal power. Do not settle for anything less. Do not settle for mediocrity. And when you get hold of the true picture of this God, honoring church where God delights to be, let the Holy Spirit create the desire in you to see this church in reality and seek an appointment. Do the unusual thing. Seek and you will find it!

The rest of Samuel’s story proceeds directly from his disposition to seek God and seek the real thing; that was the foundation of his leadership calling and life.

1 Samuel 3:4

“Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.””

That was all that God was waiting for –for someone to seek an appointment, for someone to be willing to listen. The God who controls the affairs of this universe, the Almighty God who knows you by name is waiting to speak to you and use you as an instrument to bring about, to bring into reality a prevailing church that will be relevant in this rapidly changing culture.

Now we could easily conclude here, say the benediction and be really blessed; but I need to warn you about the possible implications of hearing the voice of God.

Read 1 Samuel: 3:5-7.

Samuel hears the voice of God, but thinks that it is Eli calling him because up to that point Samuel did not know what the voice of God sounded like; he had never heard him. So twice he hears the voice and twice he runs to Eli and twice Eli sends him back to bed.

God is breaking silence; He is revealing himself to Samuel in new, fresh and unexpected ways; he runs to his leader to seek counsel...TWICE Eli sends him back to bed. Maybe Eli thought that he was the only one who should hear God and did not realize that God would reveal himself to a young person, to a ‘boy.’

Even in our days, too many young people are sent back to bed when God reveals Himself to them in new and fresh ways, in ways that leaders do not recognize; they are too often misunderstood. They believe the same message, but are wrapping the message up in a relevant cultural package that others do not understand and they are sent back to bed.

But I love the persistence of God and I love the persistence of youth.

1 Samuel 3:8

“The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said. “Here I am; you called me.”

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Then Eli realized that it was the Lord calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel *“Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, say ‘Speak Lord, your servant is listening.’”*

The rest is amazing.

1 Samuel 3:10

The Lord came and stood there, calling as the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

It is amazing that the Lord, the creator of heaven and earth did not only speak, He came and stood there. He graced the boy Samuel with his Holy presence.

Because one unlikely little boy was prepared to listen. He was not called boy any more.

The calling of Samuel as the servant leader concludes with these words:

1 Samuel 3:21, 4:1.

“The Lord continued to appear to him at Shiloh, and there He revealed Himself to Samuel through his word.

And Samuel’s words came to all Israel.”

The story begins with God on the way out; it concludes with God reestablishing home at Shiloh; it begins with the Word of the Lord being rare; it concludes with God restoring continuous revelation.

It was a new day for the nation.

The boy Samuel was the new leader; the unlikely new leader.

He refused to settle for the status quo;
He did not quit;
but took his vision,
vision of a preferable future,
vision born out the story of his miraculous birth
He took his vision to God, His supreme leader.
He counted on God for its fulfilment.
God delivered. He is faithful.

You are called to be a leader; God has blessed you with at least one spiritual gift as a foundation for your leadership.

God would delight to use an unlikely leader just like you to make a difference for His Kingdom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the setting as given in verse 1. **Discuss together** the significance of the phrase, *“In those days the word of the Lord was rare, there were not many visions.”* How do you believe Israel came to this point where God seemed both silent and absent? Was the problem God, or Israel?
2. What do you say to someone who complains that God seems absent? (Read Psalm 73 to expand your discussion).
3. Why is it important that Samuel continued to serve as he does in verse 1 even though little seemed to be happening spiritually?
4. As Christians, how should we respond when God “seems” to be doing less than He did before?
5. Eli was physically and spiritually blind. He was not only fat physically, but spiritually complacent (see how he lies in his usual place in verse 2. He was also a negligent father, verse 13.) What impact does poor spiritual leadership have on a community and nation? How important is it that pastors and Christian leaders maintain a high moral standard and what is the evidence when they don’t? (See also I Timothy 3).
6. How significant was it to this dark spiritual setting that in verse 3 the lamp of the Lord had not yet gone out? What does this tell you about the value of God’s presence when everything around seems so dark? (See also John 1:5 and Hebrews 13:5-6).
7. Where was Samuel sleeping in verse 3? How different is this from where Eli slept and why was that significant? What does this say about Samuel’s hunger for God? Which of the two (Eli or Samuel) describes you?

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As Christians we are hardwired to believe that God has a purpose for our lives. A right road to travel, a well-defined career track, and a perfect-for-us companion with whom to share the journey.

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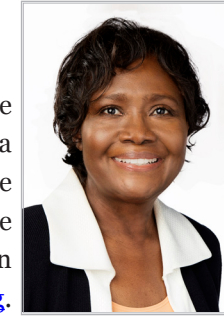
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Elected at the 2005 General Conference Session, held in St. Louis, Missouri, Dr. Ella Simmons holds the distinction of being the first woman to serve as a vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. She can be reached at simmonse@gc.adventist.org.

DAY 3 Deborah: the courageous prophetess

Introduction and Background

Much of the modern poetry in song lyrics belittles women in the worst ways. However, there is a poem in the Bible that elevates woman to the highest. It is found in Proverbs 31 and begins by asking the question, “Who can find a good woman?” Now this might lead you to think that it’s another belittling rhyme. But read on and you will find something marvelous. It sings her praises, telling of her spirituality, intelligence, loyalty, industry (or diligence), modesty, courage, and piety. It says she is more valuable than rubies.

She is a woman of resolution, who has adopted good principles and is firm and steady in them. She is not frightened by challenges of her duties. She is said to be a capable helper for her man. This is a virtuous woman, meaning one of power, wealth, status. Yet, the account suggests that good women are scarce and that many who appear to be good prove otherwise.¹

Nevertheless, there was a shining example of virtuous womanhood long before The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals reminded the world that “gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”² Although women in national and international leadership are rare today, only about one in five,³ way back in the 12th century there was a woman who led her nation. Before the value of women had advanced little beyond Mother Eve’s failure, before there were role models for reference, there was a woman whom God gifted and called to lead His people.

The biblical definition of gender equality can be found in Genesis 1:26-28.

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Little is known about her early life, her parents or lineage, and how she was raised. We don't know how she was educated and how her gifts and talents were developed. We don't know the age at which God called her. But we might reason that she was a young woman when God called her, because scripture says—following Israel's defeat of the Canaanites: "So the land had rest for forty years."⁴ Jewish historians tell us that "For forty happy years the Jews lived in peace under the wise guardianship of Deborah and Barak."⁵ Was she born displaying a prophetic gift or was she endowed with the prophetic gift later in life?

What most agree on is that this unique, remarkable woman was a wife, mother, political leader, warrior, commander in chief of her nation's military force, poet, singer, prophetess, and her nation's supreme counselor under God. Her name means "bee or honeybee," a most appropriate label contrasting her combination of diverse traits—intelligence, courage, grace, tenacity, faithfulness, strength, humility, assertiveness, and so forth. Most importantly, she was totally committed to God and His service.

Bible scholars and historians know her as Deborah, judge over Israel who led the Israelite army to victory over the Canaanites. Some speculate that she was named for another Deborah who was Rebecca's nurse, who by this time had died, but who was still greatly admired for her loyalty and gifts for nurturing others. "Her life is a wonderful illustration of the power that womanhood has to influence society for good."⁶ She was a rare woman for her time and ours, as well. Perhaps this is one reason the Bible contains two accounts of her story. First, chapter four of the book of Judges that tells her story in narrative form, then chapter five provides a poetic version in song lyrics. Let's look at her story, in part, at least.

Scriptural Story: Judges 4:4-8

"Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'" And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

Deborah, Judge Over Israel

Deborah was the fourth Judge of Israel before they chose a king. She was the appointed judge during a time when Israel had been oppressed, indeed enslaved, by King Jabin of Canaan for 20 years (Judges 4:2–3). She is the only judge in this book described as actually deciding court cases.⁷ Yet, here the term "judge" means more than a judicial function; it means "chief." Her position was equivalent to a combination of prophet, prime minister or president, and supreme court judge, all in one woman. Surely, Deborah was a woman of strength, and her strength came from her wisdom and grace, and the fear of God. The language that describes her strength is the same used in Exodus 18:21 describing the character of good judges—able, qualified, truthful, fearing God. She is a woman of spirit who has control over her own spirit and knows how to influence others.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary indicates that she judged as a prophet, correcting abuses and rectifying grievances in Israel.⁸ Deborah's responsibilities were tremendously challenging during a most difficult time for Israel, but through reliance on God and by His grace she rose to the occasion. One source says:

The people were dejected and afraid, for their spirits had been broken and all hope of deliverance had vanished. But Deborah did more than prophesy; she aroused the nation from its lethargy and despair. Hers was a fearless and unsolicited devotion to the emancipation of God's people, and she awoke in them a determination to free themselves from their wretched bondage and degradation. Out went her call and challenge to the help of the Lord against the enemy. Day after day, she excited those who gathered to hear her words of divine wisdom with the certainty of deliverance from a heathen foe if only they would bestir themselves from their folly and fear and go out and fight.⁹

Can you see this picture? Look at who she is and how she rules.

There she sits under the shade of the palm of Deborah (named for "tree of mourning," under which Rachel's nurse, Deborah, was buried (Gen. 35:8)).¹⁰ Her courtroom is nestled in the hot, dry, golden hills of Ephraim between Ramah and Bethel. Hot winds are blowing—both seasonal winds and the winds of strife. She is patient and wise, greeting each one with a motherly smile, while deep within her heart is heavy with concern. Many believe that Deborah never actually gave birth, but became a mother in Israel to all—spiritual motherhood. Either qualifies her for the designation of mother. Her people come to her as both a loving mother and firm judge for counsel, to have their disputes settled or to be tried for wrongdoing. They know she is fair and accurate in her judgements because her wisdom comes from the Lord, and they submit to her rule.

From her vantage point, physically and prophetically, she discerns problems in Israel. These are more than the little daily disputes over property lines or the cost of grain or unsettled debts. She sees through the physical and the spiritual eye that political conditions are worsening. Her nation, her people, are in trouble. They have lost their way spiritually and as a result fell prey to the enemies of their nation. In the valley below, armed bands of Canaanites are harassing the Israelite peasants. Caravans of travelers are now avoiding this region. They are too frightened to take the main roads through this

area. This is tragic because trade with the travelers is the lifeblood of Deborah's people. Worse yet, it is a time of chaos, a time that called for strong leadership. In answering God's call to leadership for resisting and eliminating these devastating threats, Deborah stepped into an extraordinary place in Biblical history. She became a female military leader.¹¹

Some tell you that life for women is an either-or-choice between family and public ministry or service, and that leadership is for men only. All who work for God must have the Martha and the Mary attributes blended. The Bible is clear that life can be all if that is God's call to the woman. "God can do whatever he wants, and if he wants to work through non soldiers—that is, women—he can."¹²

Deborah, Warrior in Israel

This was the time of spiritual darkness and chaos after the death of Joshua when Israel struggled under the hostile, oppressive Canaanite rule and national collapse. Finally, under Deborah's leadership they repented and cried out to the Lord for deliverance. They were now ready to resist and the struggle would climax in one final battle. The whole story is described in vivid detail in Judges 5 that portrays the disorder and defeat that existed until Deborah arose as a mother in Israel" (5:7).¹³

Between Deborah's identification in Judges 4:4 as "a prophet" and "a woman" another identifier, typically translated "wife of Lappidoth" indicates that Deborah was married—to Lappidoth. Some, however, translate the phrase as "fiery or spirited woman," or literally "woman of torches."¹⁴ This suggests that Deborah was a charismatic leader—not a "domesticated version of the woman warrior."¹⁵ We see this woman of torches, this fiery woman in her interactions with Barak, a military general from Naphtali.

First, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, Deborah called Barak to gather and equip an army and go to war. Barak's response is revealing (Judges 4:6,14) in that he did not hesitate in responding to her call. He trusted and respected Deborah. However, other factors tested his faith. Barak was an experienced, brave, and insightful military leader. But he clearly read the conditions of his people which shook his confidence. They were not organized or armed as a military unit. They did not display skills, courage, and hope needed to face a strong well-equipped enemy as the Canaanites. In fact, they were discouraged—perhaps too depressed to rally to fight, and Deborah said they had to fight for God's deliverance.

Surely Barak believed that God had chosen him to lead the deliverance of Israel. This was no surprise to him. He had the assurance that God would go into battle with him, and moreover he was assured that God would conquer the enemy. Yet, Barak, an aggressive warrior found himself suddenly fainthearted and skeptical. He accepted Deborah's message as the word of God. There was no need to worry or hesitate. But, he just did not trust his countrymen. He had virtually no confidence in Israel's ability to come together, and less in their ability to overcome the strong Canaanite army.

As though this was not enough, he feared that even if they could overcome these shortcomings, they would not obey his command. However, he had seen that they would obey Deborah and her prophesy of victory. So, Barak relied on Deborah for strength, hope, and resolve. He declared firmly that if she would go into battle he would go, and if she would not go into battle he would not go.

Faithfully, he assembled an army of ten thousand men and marched them to Mount Tabor, as the Lord had commanded. His troops were terrified at the site of Canaanites equipped with the latest in fighting machines and spread all over the valley. Nevertheless, they took position in the mountains and waited to attack. With Deborah's assurance Barak led his army down into the open plain to battle. Just as Deborah had prophesied, God fought for Israel and overcame the superior enemy that day (*The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1881).¹⁶

Barak needed Deborah's prophetic guidance and he needed the assurance of her personal strength of conviction. He even needed her to tell him when to begin the battle (Judges 5:14). She gave all and assured him of victory. But all of this was still not enough for Barak. He would take no chances. He needed Deborah's actual presence in the midst of the battle. The language, "to go into battle" (as also used in Judges 6:3; 15:10; 18:9) indicates that Deborah physically participated in the battle alongside Barak. She did not fail him.

Deborah's courage enabled Barak to defeat the enemies. "Had she been reluctant to follow God's will, the nation would have remained oppressed. Had she not been the example of trust and full obedience, then Israel would not have found blessings."¹⁷ They made a great combination in battle. "Barak, whose name means "lightning," and Deborah, whose name means "bee," worked together as a team. Their troops then were to strike like lightning and sting like a bee!"¹⁸ They¹⁹ were victorious.

Summary

Deborah accepted and was true to her calling as mother, prophet, judge, and warrior. She was respected as wise, decisive, courageous, inspiring and bold. Her confidence was in God's word and promise. She certainly was God's person for the hour. She had come to the kingdom for such a time as that time in Israel.

Today the Church and society need women like Deborah who will answer God's call. Her life is a wonderful illustration of the power that womanhood has to influence society for good. Deborah was a true example of the virtuous woman. The "virtuous woman"

is literally “a woman of power.” She is strong, vigorous, and possesses excellent qualities. The Hebrew words may be interpreted as meaning, “a woman of firm character.” The ideal woman of Proverbs 31 is the model for Godly womanhood and Deborah fits the model.

Lessons from Deborah’s life confirm the critical role of women in the Church and the world. Women are vital to the success of the Church and productive societies. God calls women to the gospel commission in general and some to leadership specifically. God’s cause needs women to overcome today’s crises (Judges 4:14b).²⁰ Everyone who receives God’s blessing is to respond by engaging in service. All must use every gift for the advancement of God’s kingdom and the glory of His name.

APPEAL TO SERVICE

Deborah, the honeybee, constantly sought out beauty and endeavored to bring sweetness into her world, in international affairs, civic concerns, family dynamics, and individual life circumstance. But she could sting when necessary. “Science confirms the ancient belief that, of all the animal kingdom, the bee ranks among the highest in intelligence.”²¹ Ellen White says: “Our sisters have been too willing to excuse themselves from bearing responsibilities which require thought and close application of the mind; yet this is the very discipline they need to perfect Christian experience.”²²

Often the circumstances of life dissuade women from answering God’s call to service, particularly in ministry and leadership. They are overwhelmed by the typical responsibilities of life or they are discouraged by the devaluing of women in society and even the Church by tradition. Mrs. White encourages: “Sisters, do not become weary of vigilant missionary labor.”²³ Women can take their place in the work at this crisis, and the Lord will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Spirit of God, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Savior will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and this will give them a power that will exceed that of men.²⁴

God calls for earnest women workers, workers who are prudent, warm-hearted, tender, and true to principle. He calls for persevering women, who will take their minds from self and their personal convenience, and will center them on Christ,²⁵ . . .

Act faithfully your part at your appointed post of duty. Work earnestly, remembering that Christ is by your side, planning, devising, and constructing for you. “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” If you are in close connection with God, you will be willing to make any sacrifice to place eternal life within the reach of the perishing.²⁶

Luke reminds us in Acts 2:17-18 (NKJV), “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.” This includes you. The promise is for all to receive God’s Spirit and all the young men and young women shall prophesy! Nothing could be more exciting.

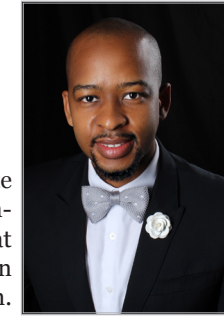
Without regard for gender, age, or social status God will pour out His Spirit in these last days. The question is will you receive God’s Spirit? Will you accept God’s call to ministry and service? He has a special work just for you. He has gifted you for your work. Will you accept your call today? (*Discussion Questions on the next page*)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you identify your spiritual gifts?
2. Why does it matter to God what path you choose for your life—lifestyle, career, etc.?
3. How do you know what God is calling you to do?
4. What is the best way to align yourself for a given profession or position?
5. Does God still work miracles in the lives of individuals and people groups today?

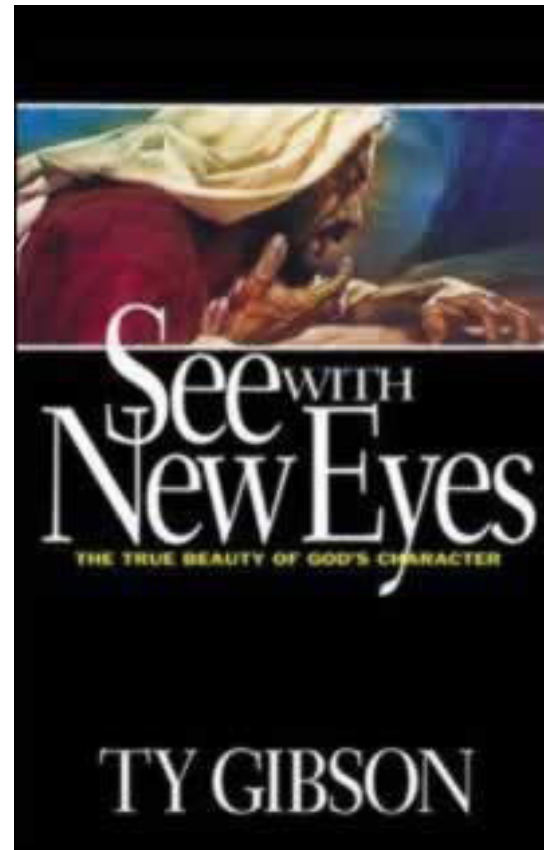


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DAY 4

Jumping Jehoshaphat: faithful leader

“And Jehoshaphat feared and set to himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” (2 Chronicles 20:3)

There are numerous outcries around the world. One of the greatest outcry is for seasoned leadership. For the Bible believing Christian, much can be gleaned from the experiences of individuals who were called to lead in the civic and spiritual realms. The civic leadership was solely for kings and the spiritual leadership was for priests and prophets.

Jehoshaphat was a King of Judah. In the Hebrew culture, the naming of a child was a very special responsibility. Parents named their children in the hope that the children would personify the meaning of the name. Jehoshaphat is a combination of two Hebrew words, Jeho (short for Jehovah) and shaphat (He rules). Therefore, the meaning of the name is, Jehovah rules. It was expected of the boy child to allow God to rule his life.

From this story in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30, we learn how leaders should deal with fear – by seeking the LORD.

A God-Fearing Leader

We catch up with Jehoshaphat when he is king—a civic leader who has natural inclinations towards spiritual leadership. In Chapter 17 of 2 Chronicles, we learn that Jehoshaphat, after assuming his position as king, sent chosen leaders and Levites to teach the law of God. As a result, the fear of the Lord fell upon the kingdoms around Judah such that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. Various kingdoms came to pay tribute to Jehoshaphat by presenting him with silver and domestic animals. So, Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful and his influence was felt throughout the

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land. The dividends of fearing God are natural. Jehoshaphat did not ask for, or demand respect and power. It came because other nations were watching the quality of his reign. It was filled with God's guidance and rule. The king observed that while he managed the trade and citizenry of his people, there was a greater kingdom and power above his throne. Above the civility of kingly duties, there was a kingdom above his own, the kingdom of God to whom all kings and lords should bow. The ability to run a kingdom and still have a clear understanding of God as ruler is true wisdom. Jehoshaphat possessed a power of faith and godliness that does not corrupt, power that is not self-seeking. The king was such a man, he allowed God to rule his life. He in turn, passed on this lifestyle to his subjects. It for this reason that when Ahab entreated Jehoshaphat to partner with him in war against Ramoth Gilead, the response was, "Please inquire for the word of the Lord today." Jehoshaphat knew that their success depended on the Lord. Unfortunately, Jehoshaphat and his accomplice disobeyed. He knew God's will but was too proud to humbly withdraw his promised help. There are important lessons here that should be brought out—most prominently among them, that obedience to God's word should be sacredly maintained, even at great cost to us personally. Leaders should be willing to surrender pride and opinions to God's wisdom. We should not let the expectations of others (even if we have encouraged them) lead us to make choices contrary to God's word it was Jehoshaphat's culture to allow God to rule even in the process of making decisions.

"To this wise provision for the spiritual needs of his subjects, Jehoshaphat owed much of his prosperity as a ruler. In obedience to God's law there is great gain. In conformity to the divine requirements there is a transforming power that brings peace and good will among men. If the teachings of God's word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place. From every home would go forth an influence that would make men and women strong in spiritual insight and in moral power, and thus nations and individuals would be placed on vantage ground." (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 192)

A Prayerful Leader

Some time later the Moabites and Ammonites, accompanied by Meunites, joined forces to make war on Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat received this intelligence report: "A huge force is on its way from beyond the Dead Sea to fight you. There's no time to waste—they're already at Hazazon Tamar, the oasis of En Gedi."

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Shaken, Jehoshaphat prayed. He went to God for help and ordered a nationwide fast. The country of Judah united in seeking God's help—they came from all the cities of Judah to pray to God. (2 Chronicles 20:3-4)

It happened one day, that the armies of Moab and Ammon came against Jehoshaphat. As was his custom, he turned to the Lord. He knew where his help would come from. The king called all the inhabitants of Judah to the temple to pray. A fast was declared throughout the land. The people obeyed because the same lifestyle had been passed on

to them. They were familiar with its power and meaning hence their cooperation. What kind of a leader is this? Instead of developing a diplomatic military strategy, he calls people to the house of the Lord, to seek the Lord. He could have opted to do it alone, but he chose to declare a fast for everyone. Probably a first by royal proclamation. Now the burden was shared by everyone and not the king alone. Team work brings good results and a good vibe.

The dynamism of godly leadership seeks to bring joy for all and a sense of accomplishment by all. The irony of the story is that when the Israelites left Egypt, God did not allow them to invade the Ammonites and Moabites. How quickly does an ally become a sudden enemy? A bright sunny day becomes a clouded noon. Things can change in a twinkling of an eye. Trouble comes uninvited. When troubles come, the leader who has God always at the top of His mind will not fret but pray. In the midst of the people, Jehoshaphat concludes his prayer, "Here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." (2 Chronicles 20:11-12)

We have a God who hears our prayers. He urges us to "Call Him that he may show us great and mighty things" (Jeremiah 33:3). The same God says, "Ask and it shall be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). Moreover, "We must be still and know that He is God" (Psalm 46:10). "His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear neither is His hand shortened that it cannot save..." (Isaiah 59:1). The Leader must approach the throne of God with confidence because, "before we call, He will answer" (Isaiah 65:24).

"Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children, and yet there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants to God."

(*Steps to Christ*, p. 94)

A believing Leader

God answered the prayer of Jehoshaphat and his people. The word of the Lord came through Jahaziel, "Do not be afraid of be dismayed for by this great multitude for the battle is not yours but God's... You will not need to fight in this battle, position yourselves, and stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 20:15 &17). Jehoshaphat fell to the ground and worshipped God. He believed the words of the prophet. He accepted the victory before the war. Faith is accepting future results in the present. The substance was the victory and the evidence of things hoped for was the word from the Lord. It was enough for Jehoshaphat to accept the Word of God, as is. Leaders are tempted to rationalize and apply logic because followers want tangible things. On the other hand, God does not expect blind faith. Reason and logic has its place, but they should never take priority over God's word. Godly leaders will subject logic (science) to faith (in God's word), recognizing that the "way that seems right" may be disastrous (Prov 16:25).

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The general order of war in those days was structured in this way:

1. Infantry – ground soldiers
2. Cavalry – soldiers on mounted horseback
3. Army officials
4. King

The infantry was always found on the frontline. Behind them came the cavalry then the army officials. The king was always at the back, for protection. Jehoshaphat believed the Word of the Lord with all his heart and mind. He chose from among his people singers. There was no need for an army because the Lord had declared that Judah will not need to fight in this battle and that the battle belonged to Him, the LORD. So, it was the King and the choir who went against the enemy. It didn't take much effort to convince the people about this strategy because they had heard the Word of the Lord for themselves and saw the King acting on his faith in its reliability. They also believed and that, too, was essential for success. They did not have sword or spear but sang praises to the Lord. They chanted, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever." Indeed "Our weapons of warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4) So Judah worshiped as they approached the enemy. The enemy got so confused that they killed each other. Yes, the Lord showed up and remained true to His word, "You will not need to fight in this battle."

There are battles that leaders fight using their own power and intellect and yet nothing comes out of the battle. The leader should allow God to do things His way even though it may be unusual, different and unpopular. Who goes to war without a spear and sword? Who goes to war praising and worshipping? Who does that? Only a leader who moves in the Spirit of God. Only followers who move in the Spirit of God. Greater responsibility rests upon the leader, but the followers also have a part to play. The work of a leader is made easier when followers corporate with the Spirit of God.

"Often the Christian life is beset with dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage and death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, Go forward. Let us obey the command, even though our sight cannot penetrate the darkness. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey. Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence, therefore it cannot be baffled. Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency." (*Gospel Workers*, p. 262)

A Praising Leader

Jehoshaphat and his people have won the battle. The spoils they gathered was so much it took them three full days to collect, and they still could not collect it all (see 2 Chronicles 20: 25, 26). There in the valley of Berachah (meaning "blessing"), Jehoshaphat led Judah into another praise and worship session. In the "Valley of Blessings," they blessed the name of the Lord. They extolled His Holy name. That's it! Enemies (Moab and Ammon) may try to seize the blessing but it will be given by God to His children forever, as long as they remain faithful. Those who are faith-ful will be faithful. We must not be reckless with the blessings, instead we should be stewards of the blessings! The more we believe the Lord and praise Him for what He will do, the less it becomes about us as individuals and the more it becomes about God. It is important for leaders to give God the praise for our victories and success. Such a discipline will keep the leader humble and the same spirit will be encouraged in the lives of the followers. The parading of egos and kingly power among leaders encourages a spirit of discord and strife, but when the Lord is the subject of the glory all people can identify, making it easy to win the confidence of the people.

Conclusion

"God was the strength of Judah in this crisis, and He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency, we are to know that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater." (*Prophets and Kings* p. 202)

A leader must fear God – do it!

A leader must pray – love it

A leader must believe – show it!

A leader must praise God – express it!

Come to Him without filters

Read more in Psalm 62

APPEAL

Your name does not need to be Jehoshaphat to fear God, to pray, to believe, and to praise Him. Every Christian must do this. This is our duty; it brings joy, peace, courage and contentment. Is it your desire to allow God to rule your life so that His reign may bring the best out of you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Jehoshaphat demonstrate what faithful servants of God should do when faced with threatening circumstances? (2 Chron. 20:12; Ps. 25:15; 62:1)
2. After reading the verses below, why do you think God instructed them to send singers to lead the way?

Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his[c] holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."

As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

3. How does the Lord communicate with his people today? Does he still use prophets?
4. What should we do when we are tempted to doubt or disobey God's word?
5. What do you think would happen if we imitated the Levites, pioneers, and missionaries of our church today?
6. Read the following passage:

Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his[c] holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."

What this passage mean to you personally and how can you apply it in your life and daily decision-making?



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DAY 5

From Behind the Plow to Spiritual Leadership

Introduction

I consider it a privilege to worship with you, during the week we have been studying leadership. Spiritual leadership is necessary for God's people, through History, to inspire and to influence others' lives so that everyone is ready to follow the Lord's bidding, because He is our Supreme Leader.

In each stage of my life I have been influenced by great leaders. God has given me an opportunity to grow watching leaders like my parents, teachers, pastors and elders, friends, and colleagues. They have inspired me, helped me, taught me, challenged me, and encouraged me to be the person God wants me to be. I hope that this is also true for you.

History shows that the church has had talented, trustworthy and treasured leadership throughout generations. However, no matter how gifted, honorable and appreciated the leaders of past generations have been, the baton must change hands one day, because God is always raising up new leaders.

Ellen White says:

"The Lord calls for strong, devoted, self-sacrificing young men and women, who will press to the front, and who, after a short time spent in school, will go forth prepared to give the message to the world."¹

Do you remember the story of Elisha? Elisha was called by Elijah to "leave the plow and do the bidding of God."²

Looking at the call and experience of Elisha, we are going to find three important steps in the process of moving from behind the plow to spiritual leadership.

#1. **Reveal your desire for the leadership mantle, to honor God, doing well the things God gives you to do.**

To move from behind the plow and to embrace the mantle (or the baton) of leadership you must desire to honor the Lord. Do well whatever thing God gives you to do.

1 Kings 19:19-21 says that after God said to Elijah to anoint Elisha to succeed him, from the mountain where God manifested his presence and restored his ministry, “Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.” Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?” So, Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.”³

Until that very moment Elisha had been working in anonymity. He was just an obscure farmer, but one who was following God and remaining true to Him. He was one of the seven thousand to whom God made reference to Elijah as those who were remaining loyal to Him. “Elisha was willing to do whatever God asked of him.”⁴

Ellen White says that: “As Elijah, divinely directed in seeking a successor, passed the field in which Elisha was plowing, he cast upon the young man’s shoulders the mantle of consecration. During the famine, the family of Shaphat had become familiar with the work and mission of Elijah, and now the Spirit of God impressed upon Elisha’s heart the meaning of the prophet’s act. To him it was the signal that God had called him to be the successor of Elijah.”⁵

How did Elisha demonstrate that he was ready to accept the mantle of ministry?

He ceased immediately to plow his field. Slaughtering his oxen, he built a sacrificial fire from the wooden plow and harnesses he was using, then he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant. By this action, Elisha demonstrated how much he wanted to pick up Elijah’s mantle.

The same God who led Elijah to be the mentor of Elisha as the new leader, is calling experienced leaders to be our mentors today. The time when the baton must change hands has come. God is ready to raise up new leaders. Let us pray about this; it may be that we are not hearing them, that we are not looking at them but they are “already in the room waiting for us to greet” them.⁶

Dear young person, are you one of them? How will you demonstrate that you are willing to take the mantle and lift the baton?

#2. **Be patient and persevere waiting for the mantle of leadership.**

To move behind the plow and embrace the mantle of leadership you must remember that God has His time for you, and you must persevere patiently waiting your time to wear the leadership mantle. “God’s purpose works only with God’s timing.”⁷

When God’s time came, Elijah was more than happy to pass the ministry baton to Elisha. And Elisha, who had been serving patiently and joyfully for Elijah, was more than willing to catch the pass.

Ellen White says, “The prophetic call came to Elisha while, with his father’s servants, was plowing in the field. He had taken up the work that lay nearest. He possessed both the capabilities of a leader among men and the meekness of one who is ready to serve. Of a quiet and gentle spirit, he was nevertheless energetic and steadfast. Integrity, fidelity, and the love and bearing of God were his, and in the humble round of daily toil he gained strength of purpose and nobleness of character, constantly increasing in grace and knowledge. While co-operating with his father in the home life duties, he was learning to co-operate with God.”⁷

There is nothing humiliating in serving; there is only the absence of wishing and decision. You must do your best in the small things, because little things in life well done will help you to develop the spirit and character to do bigger, bolder things. When Elisha decided to accept God’s call, “...he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.” 1 Kings 19:21.

This was the testimony from others about him. The Bible says that some time after Elijah was translated to heaven, when Jehoshaphat asked Joram, son of Ahab, “Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?” A servant of the king of Israel answered, “Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.” 2 Kings 3:11. Elisha was asked to do the lowliest tasks, and he always did them well, always trying to honor the Lord. He labored together with Elijah, gaining preparedness and waiting for God’s purposes and God’s timing to do a greater work.

How much time passed by between Elisha’s selection by Elijah in 1 Kings 19, and Elisha’s inheritance of Elijah’s mantle in 2 Kings 8?

We can’t know it with precision. But, notwithstanding how long it took, Elisha waited for the time God had appointed for him to take over from Elijah and begin his (Elisha’s) prophetic ministry. He persevered faithful to God’s calling and faithful to his duty as Elijah’s servant. He was not stopped by obstacles nor was he moved away from his task captivated by distractions. Faithful in little things, day-by-day, following Elijah and pouring water on his hands, Elisha learned to serve, and in this way he learned also how to lead and how to instruct others.

Dear young person, you don’t know God’s purpose for you in His discipline. In II Timothy 2:15 Paul says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

God knows your heart, He looks deeper than the surface. He knows how you are serving Him in the little things. Even as you engage in ordinary everyday duties you may be in active service to God.

Ellen White wrote, “The call to place all on the altar of service comes to each one. We are not all asked to serve as Elisha served, nor are we all bidden to sell everything we have; but God asks us to give His service the first place in our lives, to allow no day to pass without doing something to advance His work in the earth. He does not expect from all the same kind of service. One may be called to ministry in a foreign land; another may be asked to give of his means for the support of gospel work. God accepts the offering of each. It is the consecration of the life and all its interests, that is necessary. Those who make this consecration will hear and obey the call of Heaven.”⁸

Be patient and persevere waiting for the mantle of leadership.

#3. exalt God’s power.

To move from behind the plow and pick up the mantle of leadership you must ask for a double portion of the Holy Spirit in your life to exalt God’s power.

In inspiring and mentoring young people to move from behind the plow to spiritual leadership, we should not put too much emphasis on appearances. Lord, help us to look at things the way You look at things, give us wisdom to consider the heart more than the aspect. God, we know you have no interest in knowing how things are doing; You are interested in seeing how we grow and how much our hearts are opened to the influence and the transforming power of the Holy Ghost.

Elisha was called to take his place in the first rank after he had been serving humbly for his master for some time, during that time he became the greater man. He had worked as a learner under Elijah. And, when the time came to remove the head manager, the one under him was prepared to come to the front. Elisha was prepared to become Elijah’s successor as a prophet.⁹

When Elijah knew he was nearing the end of his life, he said to the man who had served him many years, you should stay here for the Lord has sent me on to the Jordan. But Elisha who had persevered in a long faithful service to His master, said to Him “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.”

They went together to the Jordan, while fifty of the prophet’s sons stood facing them at a distance from where they could see clearly when the two of them stood by the Jordan River. The Bible says that then, “Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.” As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this

and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two. Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. “Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.” 2 Kings 2:8-14.

By his action and his prayer, Elisha invoked the power and presence of God as he assumes the prophetic mantle. He “asked not for worldly honor, or for a high place among the great men of earth. That which he craved was a large measure of the Spirit that God had bestowed so freely upon Elijah. He knew that nothing but the Spirit which had rested upon Elijah could fit him to fill the place in Israel to which God had called him.”¹⁰

After that the greater man, the head leader of the prophet’s sons had departed, everyone is asking if God is with Elisha just as much as He was with Elijah. What they wanted to know was if God was still among them. They wanted to be sure that God had called a new leader to lead them. And Elisha answered that call by parting the waters as Elijah had done. Thus, God showed the prophets that Elisha was His new man to lead them.

Conclusion

God is ready to raise new leaders. The time when the baton needs to change hands, when the leadership mantle must to be worn by a new generation of leaders, is here. It is time for the youth to move from behind the plow and pick up the mantle of leadership, and ask for a double portion of the Holy Spirit in their lives to exalt God’s power.

God has leaders today who He has called to be mentors, like Elijah, of a new generation of leaders well trained to lead others to Jesus. Paul’s appeal to us in 2 Timothy 2:2, is: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Dear fellow youth, remember that Christian leadership means to develop a Christian influence and live a life of example to those around us. It is the time for us, young people to move from behind the plow to spiritual leadership. Let us live a life that is worthy of the calling, so that when it is time to pass the baton, we will be ready to receive it.

My friend, as God did with Elisha maybe He is preparing you to lead others. Are you being mentored to take your place in leadership? Like Elisha, you must do your best in the small things, because little things of life well done will help you to develop the spirit and character to do bigger and bolder things. Ask God to give you a spirit of humility and obedience to follow, as Elisha did with Elijah, accepting any task that God sees fit to give you, even it is to pour water on the hands of present leadership.

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith...Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.” Hebrews 13:7, 17.

To move from behind the plow to spiritual leadership:

- Reveal your desire for the leadership mantle, to honor God, doing well the things God gives you to do.
- Be patient and persevere while waiting for God’s timing for you to take the mantle of leadership.
- Ask for a double portion of the Holy Spirit, and pick up the leadership mantle to exalt God’s power.
- You must announce to the world that Jesus is coming soon to take us with him to heaven.



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APPEAL

How many of you want to say to the Lord, today I decide to burn the plowing equipment of my past experiences; to burn all my flesh in the altar of service to you? Come to the altar and say to Jesus, here I am Lord, I want to use my gifts as your change agent. I’m ready to take a risk for you in order for your Kingdom to keep growing. Let’s pray.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read 2 Kings 2:2.

Discuss the importance of holy friendship and mentoring. How important is it to purposefully choose your friends, attach yourself to an older, wiser, spiritual person who can serve as your “guide”?

Read and discuss: 2 Kings 2:6-7

Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.”

And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on. Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan.

- Do you think Elijah was testing Elisha when he told him not to follow him?
- Do you believe the prophets watching from a distance received a “double portion” like Elisha did?

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References:

1. Ellen G. White, Christian Service, p. 64.
2. Ibid, p. 60
3. Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version.
4. John C Maxwell, Leaning From the Giants, (New York: Faith Words, 2014, p. 22).
5. Ellen White, Prophets and Kings, p. 219.
6. Maxwell, Intentional Living, p. 18.
7. Maxwell, Intentional Living, p. 28.
8. Prophets and Kings, p. 218.
9. Ellen G. White, Prophet and Kings, p. 221.
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DAY 6

Joseph Letters from Egypt

Let us imagine you were doing a historical research in a library. You were going through different kind of documents connected with the history of ancient Egypt. Unexpectedly you have found several personal letters of somebody named Joseph, the letters were obviously not sent out to the recipients. Reading more you discovered that Joseph made an amazing career from a slave to a prime minister of Egypt. Although he lived many ages before us, could it be that some lessons of his life would be relevant to us today?

First letter from Egypt

Dear Father Jacob,

I am writing you from Egypt. I am a slave now in the house of Potiphar, the chief of security service of Pharaoh palace. I miss you so very much. I could never imagine my life so drastically changed. I never thought that my brothers could be so cruel to me. I still hear their angry voices in my head when I went to see them at Dothan. You know, father, they wanted to kill me. And if that caravan of merchants was not passing by at that time they probably would have.

I don’t know what they told you about me. Probably that I was lost in the desert and never came to see them? Did they bring to you my beautiful robe, your present, that they so brutally took away from me? Probably they tore it apart, sprinkled it with lamb’s blood and told you I was eaten up by a wild animal? What had I done to them? Did they envy me because you loved me so much and took care of me in a special way when mom died? Did they hate me because of the dreams I saw in which they bowed down to me?

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They sold me to Midianites and they brought me to Egypt and sold me here to Potiphar. People in Egypt do not know about the one true God who made the heaven and the earth. They worship the sun and the moon, they consider their river sacred and Pharaoh a son of God, they have many idols. Their language is strange and I could not understand a word at first. They eat disgusting food but I am thankful for the variety of fruits and rice. Although they don't give much to slaves, at least the food I eat is

clean. The weather is very hot here, but it is cool at nights and there is enough water in the house to wash before the night and to water the crops, the palms, and the flowers. Rich people have pools in their houses, they wear white tunics from fine linen, and use interesting system of building their houses and pyramids. They do things differently and would consider us with our tents and sheep as primitive people.

It is not easy to be a slave here, but I remember what you taught me and try to be responsible even in small things. I decided to do everything as for the Lord. I talk to Him often. I pray for a miracle, but it seems God is silent now. I don't understand why God allowed this to happen. Does He punish me for something I have done? Or is He just testing me? I don't understand. I try to remind myself that He will never forsake me and that there is nothing so bad that I could have done in the past or present that would make Him leave me. But there are times when it is hard to believe He is at my side.

At my sleepless nights, I look at the stars and remember your tent, your kind eyes, and your voice telling me how much you love me. I remember all the stories you told me about God's providence in your life. I try to believe He is guiding me now although sometimes it is hard to believe. In spite of what my brothers did to me, I would trade anything to go back home. Sometimes I feel I hate them and worry if my little brother Benjamin is safe when they are around. I love you and miss you so-so much.

Your son,
Joseph

Second letter from Egypt

Dear Father Jacob,

I cannot tell you how grateful I am to God of our fathers, who kept me safe here in this strange land of Egypt. And not only for that. He gave me a favor in the eyes of Potiphar and led me to a position I never dreamed of. Potiphar made me a manager of his whole household. He trusted everything in my hands and he treats me as his son. I am dealing with so many different tasks and people each day and I remembered all your lessons so many times. Thank you very much for all you taught me. It would not be possible to rule over this big household without that knowledge. I do everything as for the Lord, and they

say that everything I touch, flourishes! But I know that this happens because of the blessing of the Lord. Potiphar also acknowledged that. He said that he saw that my God blessed his house because of me and that his riches and prosperity were increased because my God had been blessing his household because of me. In my position of responsibility, I treat all people equally, despite their status. I don't humiliate slaves because I know now what it means to be a slave. Each day is interesting with new opportunities and some challenges. I feel more at home now although I still miss you very much.

There is one thing though. My boss is a very fine man and as I said he trusts me beyond the measure. He has a beautiful wife. She looks very attractive, she loves beauty and luxury, and she is after me. I pray to be strong and faithful to God. I cannot break the commandment or dishonor my boss. I never spoke with you about such things but I hope that I can stay faithful to what God has told us about the sanctity of marriage and will not dishonor God and His name. If I would have an affair it would also disrupt and destroy the good relationship with my master. I remember how you loved my mom and also the tragedy that happened when Dinah went to Shechem. I want to have a happy home and a happy family someday. I want to do everything right. I don't want to say something that will hinder my happiness in the future. This little thing poisons my life that otherwise is very good now. I pray to the Lord to protect me from the evil one and keep me safe in this temptation.

Love you so very much. Miss you greatly.

Your
Joseph

Third letter from Egypt

Dear Father,

My life has drastically changed again. I am in prison. I was accused of the attempting to rape Potiphar's wife, the crime I had never done. In fact, I ran out of the room leaving my robe in her hands when she caught me by my robe. I asked again "Why?" Why did God allow this to happen when I was so devoted to Him? How could I do this in the eyes of my Lord? He was always before my sight. Day and night I was talking to Him, I was doing everything in His glorious name. I could only survive there because of His help and His blessings. How could I betray my God and also the trust of my boss? I could not do this.

When I was thrown in the prison, those who envied me were rejoicing. However, I knew in whom I believed. Does the Lord test me again? Do I need more patience than I had already developed? I don't know. But I chose to remember every good thing God allowed to happen to me in Egypt. I chose to trust into Him again, in spite of the circumstances. And I was not disappointed. God gave me favor in the eyes of the prison warden, and he made me his assistant. He put me in charge of all prisoners, and I am now responsible for

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all things here. Now I understand people more especially those who do not deserve their suffering. I try to be kind to them. Three days ago a strange thing happened. I saw two people who were very perplexed and sad. When I asked them about their problems, they told me the dreams they dreamed that night. When I heard their stories, I told them about God who knew the future and could interpret the dreams. I asked God about the meaning and He gave me the understanding of those dreams. And today everything was fulfilled in the same way God had shown to me: the Pharaoh's baker was executed and Pharaoh's wine steward was restored in his position and taken back to the palace.

Father, this made me to remember special dreams I had at home that one day my brothers would come and bow down to me. I don't know how and when it will happen, but I have this strange feeling that God encouraged me then and now that my future would always be in His hands. I asked the Pharaoh's wine steward to remember me when everything would be going good for him and help me get out of the prison because I did nothing to deserve being here. I hope for the better but I also know that my destiny depends on God and not on people. I also remembered your dream about the ladder and the angels coming up and down it. I know God is still in charge. He is in control. I will patiently wait for His plans about my future.

Yours,
Joseph

Fourth letter from Egypt

Dear Father,

So many things happened since my last letter. First of all, I learned one more time that no man is forgotten by God. I was quite surprised when I was called out of prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Two years passed by since I interpreted the dreams of the baker and the wine steward. Nothing happened during this time, and now I was brought to the palace of the Pharaoh and he told me that he saw several strange dreams about seven fat and seven thin cows, and also about seven full ears of corn and seven thin ears of corn. In both cases the thin cows and thin ears of corn swallowed the fat cows and full ears of corn. Nobody could interpret these dreams to the Pharaoh and the wine steward remembered and recommended me. Of course, it is not me, it is the Lord who gives me understanding of dreams. He gave me the meaning of these dreams too. I told the Pharaoh that through these dreams God predicted seven years of great harvest and seven years of famine. And he put me in charge of the whole land to gather all the harvest during the seven years of plenty so that the land would be prepared for the seven miserable years of the famine.

And another thing, I got married! They gave me a very beautiful girl of high origin, and I love her so very much. She gave birth to my two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. I am so happy and wish you could see my kids. When I hold them

in my arms I remember the time when you looked at me and Benjamin with the same look. I understand much more now what does it mean to be a father. To take care. To love. To guide. To always worry. To be proud. And to always want to protect.

I think I began to understand more the heart of my heavenly Father too. I learned to live with Him all these years in the land of my trouble. He was at my side all the way through the slavery, days in Potiphar house, in prison, and in my new position. The years of harvest are gone now, the years of predicted famine began. I wonder how you and my brothers are doing now. How are their families? How many children each of them has? I wish I could see all of you. I think I forgave them. It was hard, but God helped me. I pray He could preserve your lives during the time of famine. I wish I could see you at least one more time. I wish I could see your smile when you take my sons in your arms. I wish this day would come. I pray about this and I hope you all are well.

Always yours,
Joseph

Fifth letter from Egypt

My Father, who are in heaven,

I cannot believe I lived so long in this strange land of my misery! It really became a home for me. However, I never forgot that I was a stranger here and I dream to go back to the Promised land that you promised to my great grandfather Abraham. That is why I asked my brothers to take my bones, my coffin with them when You visit them here in Egypt and lead them out of here to the Promised land. I don't want them to leave me here (even dead) because I belong to You.

Looking back at my life I can only say how much I am grateful for your guidance and protection in my life! I could not imagine when I was brought to Egypt as a slave that You would be able to make everything good for me, my family, and also for the Egyptians. But you did that! You saved me, you saved people in Egypt from the famine, and You brought my family with my father and brothers here. They were all saved because You sent me here to prepare the way. That is why I told my brothers: "Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you... God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt." (Gen 45:5, 7-8, NIV) "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen.50:20, NIV).

You are an amazing Father! You turned the evil my brothers did to me into good. I don't know what could happen to me if I would not be taken away from my father. It was hard but now I see how you had prepared me for my mission. At each period of my life—at home, in Potiphar's house, and in prison—was a step forward toward

Your plan about me. I am grateful that You have used me as a vessel to save the whole Egyptian nation and to save my family from the famine.

I am grateful that you allowed me to see my father Jacob and allowed my father to see my sons! He blessed them! He saw me and lived with me for seventeen more years in Egypt, the same amount of time I lived with him at home before I was sold into slavery. You changed all of us all during that journey. I did not know that You had scheduled my meeting with my brothers but You did. I could not believe how You changed their hearts. I tested them several times when they came here to buy food, and it was obvious that they were no longer the same cruel, unmerciful, and selfish brothers. They loved each other and cared of each other, they cared of Benjamin, and of our father. You are God that transforms the hearts. Thank you that You changed my heart too. And now instead of hatred, revenge, and self-pity You filled it with love, forgiveness, and mercy. I want the future of my sons to be with Your people because You are the only true God that made the heavens and the earth. You know every one of us by the name, and You lead us to Your promised land. I can go in peace now because I know that the future of my people and my sons is in Your hands!

Your son,
Joseph

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Joseph was so successful in each place he served in Egypt? List several reasons.

2. Discuss the following Bible verses:

- Genesis 39:2
- Genesis 39:21-22
- Genesis 41:38

3. Discuss the following Ellen G. White's quotations:

“The marked prosperity which attended everything placed under Joseph's care was not the result of a direct miracle; but his industry, care, and energy were crowned with the divine blessing. Joseph attributed his success to the favor of God, and even his idolatrous master accepted this as the secret of his unparalleled prosperity. Without steadfast, well-directed effort, however, success could never have been attained. God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant.” (EGW, PP, 216-217)

“There are few who realize the influence of the little things of life upon the development of character. Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts.” (EGW, PP, 222-223)

4. Two times Joseph's robes were taken away from him. Taking into consideration a symbol of our clothes and the white robe that Jesus gives us as symbols of His righteousness, what kind of thoughts come to your mind in this connection?

5. What is significant in the last Joseph's request to his brothers to carry his bones up to the promised land?

“And through the centuries of toil which followed, the coffin, a reminder of the dying words of Joseph, testified to Israel that they were only sojourners in Egypt, and bade them keep their hopes fixed upon the Land of Promise, for the time of deliverance would surely come.” (240, PP)

6. What lessons from Joseph's life are most relevant to you?





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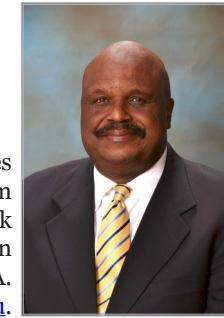
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DAY 7 David The Giant Killer

Bible Text: 1 Samuel 17:32 – 37 (KJV)

Our message for today is David “The Giant Killer.” The story of David and Goliath has always fascinated me since I was a little kid. It was one of those stories I learnt in my Sabbath School and it has stuck in my mind. This story is a very familiar story among Christians. We read about it, we talk about it, and we sing about it. You remember that little song “Only a Boy Called David, Only a Little Sling” today we are going to see the lessons that David teaches us of overcoming great odds or giants in our lives and how God can use us as youth to do great things for Him.

We are all faced with all kinds of giants.

What are the giants that you are facing today?

Maybe it is disease, depression, abuse, pornography, rejection, broken relationships, temptations, fear, past failures, anger, sex, or discouragement. Your giant will not be Goliath, but there are giants we have to face each day. Problems and concerns can feel like giants. Health problems, financial problems, and marital problems can feel like giants. Employment problems, children problems, and problems with and in the government can all look like giants. They are called by different names: Visa, Discover, MasterCard, Mortgage, etc. Names like cancer, aging, baldness, death, dishonesty, unforgiveness, unlovingness.

What giant or giants are you faced with today?

Do you hear your giants shouting in your mind?

The same thing happened to the children of Israel, God's people, and the Philistines who were their enemies at war. Every morning for over 40 days, Goliath shouted to the children of Israel. You could hear him shouting, "Why bother using your whole army? Am I not Philistine enough for you? And you're all committed to Saul, aren't you? So pick your best fighter and pit him against me. If he gets the upper hand and kills me, the Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I get the upper hand and kill him, you'll all become our slaves and serve us. I challenge the troops of Israel this day. Give me a man. Let us fight it out together!" (1 Samuel 17:8-10; *The Message* (MSG)).

Goliath's voice scared the Children of Israel to death. Goliath was a huge giant about nine and a half feet tall. He wore a helmet of brass and was armed with a coat of mail weighing at least ninety pounds. The head of his spear was made of iron and weighed at least eleven pounds. Walking around him was a shield bearer. This huge giant was well protected and apparently Israel did not have a man who was willing to fight this giant. Just the look of this man paralyzed the children on Israel. Goliath knew it and because of this it made him bolder to shout at the children of Israel.

On this particular day, Goliath—the giant—stepped forward when he saw little David standing in front of him. He shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him. When life seems hopeless, when it seems there is no way out, God is able to make a way out of no way. For forty days, Goliath called for a challenger. For forty days he taunted God's people. God's people were afraid. Then the most unlikely thing happened—a boy called David showed up. David was no soldier, he was just a boy. He had no helmet, he had no spear, he was just a boy, but this boy was not afraid to fight.

"When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sam 17:42-45).

David did what he was supposed to do. The army was not doing what they were supposed to do.

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My first thought is, Do not be afraid. David came to the king and said to him in verse 32 of our text: "Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." He was saying to King Saul don't worry about a thing, I will take care of that Philistine. When we are faced with our giants, you and I want to hear some good news. Saul was hearing some good news, the people were afraid, but it seems the good news was coming from the wrong source; it is coming from a boy who is not trained in warfare. David was about to do something extraordinary, but in verse 28 his eldest brother tried to stop him.

Great leaders see things differently.

When you are about to do something for the Lord, something that might seem impossible to man, don't let anyone stop you. As young people do not allow anybody to stop you from doing the right thing. In life as you face your giants some people even your own family members will laugh at you, but don't let them stop you. They will talk about you, but don't let them stop you. This can happen in your own family, at work, or in your own church. Many times you will be let down by people you know so well. David was fighting his own older brother who was looking down upon him. David might have thought, yes you are my big brother, but there is a giant to face. He might have thought that there is a battle to be won, and he will not allow anything to stand in the way. When the Lord is on your side, you don't have to be afraid, and you will be able to face the giant, and destroy the giant. Remember as a Christian youth, the Lord will always fight for you. You need just to allow him to fight the battle for you.

Please note very carefully, "One of the first things we must do if we are to kill the giants in our life is to overcome discouragement." There will be people close to you, people whom you trust, who will try to convince you that you cannot beat the odds. Here is a warning to everyone, be careful as to who you are receiving your advice from. There are people who will tell you, you cannot beat the system. They will tell you that the giant is too great and you are too small, but I am so glad that with God all things are possible. God can take those impossible things and make them possible. People might have told you, and maybe are still telling you that you will not amount to anything, but I can hear Paul saying in Philippians 4 verse 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me," so don't be discouraged.

Being too young is often reason enough not to grant youth to do many things. They should not be expected to discharge adult duties while so immature and inexperienced, it is unfair to them and to others that may have to depend on their performance. But was David without preparation for this encounter?

Our ability to meet the foes of life depends on how well prepared we are. Battles are lost or won in the preparation stage. For David, it was character first developed before facing the giants.

Ellen G White commenting on David's preparation says,

"His experience in these matters proved the heart of David and developed in him courage and fortitude and faith."

(*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 644).

With control of mind and temper, having self-confidence with courage, and with faith in God that undergirds it all, no "Goliath" will make us panic and become fearful, confused, and discouraged, like most of Israel did when challenged with what they thought was an impenetrable wall (giant). Rather, we shall be like David. Even when we have what may seem to be inadequate weapons and are without the armor of human construction. We will be able to fight our giants and kill them.

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E. G. White reminds us,

“Even before he was summoned to the court of Saul, David had distinguished himself by deeds of valor. The officer who brought him to the notice of the king declared him to be “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters,” and he said, “The Lord is with him”(*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 644.3),

She further says, “David was susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord in His providence trained him for His service, preparing him to carry out His purpose. Christ was the Master Builder of his character.” (*Manuscript 163*, 1902). God chose and prepared David for His work.

Criticism hurts when it comes from someone over us, in this case Eliab over David. Criticism hurts when it questions our motives. Criticism hurts when it is continual. Criticism hurts when it comes from people we have known for a long period of time in our lives. You will hear critics pointing out your failures. You are just a youth, you come at me with sticks, I will feed you to the birds and beasts.

Young people, learn a lesson from David. There are people who are overwhelmed when confronted by giants. Overwhelmed by giants who have reputation. Overwhelmed when they continually show up. Overwhelmed when others on our side are afraid. Overwhelmed, and never deal with the giant. David was not overwhelmed, he had a passion for God to be honored. David was so angry at the way God was being dishonored.

Ellen G White says, “[David] was fired with zeal to preserve the honor of the living God and the credit of His people” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 645). He had confidence in God. He could not let Goliath the giant dishonor God!

David did not try to be like Saul. In other words, Giant killers do not try to be something or someone they are not. (1 Samuel 17:38-40). During a crisis, people will try to make you act and think like them. Remember, heavy armor will weigh you down. You will never be able to defeat giants in your life with fleshly weapons. As young people God only expects us to trust in Him and use what He has given us to defeat our giants.

What if you had listened to the negative things people said? What if you had believed those discouraging remarks that were made? Where would you be today?

So, David listened to king Saul, and I believed David might have said, Oh king live forever, there is something I must tell you. And so, in verses 34 through 36 of our text David started to explain to Saul what had happened to him. **(Read verses 34 through 36 and explain.)**

King Saul, I slew a lion and a bear, and I am now ready to face this giant Goliath. King Saul, I have a testimony of how God delivered me from the lion and the bear, and this God who delivered me back then will deliver me now from this giant. King Saul. I am not discouraged, this giant has taunted God’s people, this giant has defied the armies of the living God, and it is now time to fight.

There comes a time in our lives when we have to face the giant and tell that giant enough is enough. There comes a time in our lives when we have to stand up for the truth. There comes a time in our lives when we have to face that giant, and tell that giant it is fighting time. It’s no more time for baby talk, it is no more time for small talk, it is now time to fight—but only on the Lord’s terms and for His honor, not our own.

David’s heart was not in the least intimidated; for he knew in whom was his trust. “Thou comest to me,” he said, “with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand,” “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.” (*The Signs of the Times*-1886. 9. Article Title: “The Sin of Presumption”)

Young people don’t be discouraged, but let us all face the giant and kill it. Young people of God, there might be those who are failing, but let’s face the giant and kill it. Young People, there might be those who are giving up, but let’s face the giant.

That’s not the end, there is something more. Young people, don’t be afraid; don’t be discouraged, and final victory is yours. After Saul had listened to David telling his story of how he killed the lion and the bear; after he had listened of God’s protective care of David, Saul was convinced of what God would do, and so in the latter part of verse 37, Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

We all know how the story ended we know what happened to Goliath, we know what happened to the giant who was taunting the people of God. In 1 Samuel 17 verse 49 we read these words. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, swung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

Conclusion

Read Romans 8:32.

When Goliath taunted, threatened, and drove fear into the people of God, David did not run away in fear nor waver; instead he ran into the battle. He took action. As we close, what giant or giants are you facing right now? It is said that, “All of the giants that we battle are designed to bring us closer to God. We can’t go into battle to build up an impressive record of wins or go thinking that we’ll fight the battle under our own strength.”

David knew God’s will for Israel because Moses had spelled it out clearly—they were to possess the land of Canaan and their enemies would not be able to stand against them. Read Lev 26:7-8. But all this was dependent on Israel’s keeping God’s commandments, including the Sabbath, and reverencing His sanctuary (read vv. 2-3). This was God’s word—His solemn promise. His promise that cannot fail because His word is true. It

stands fast forever and ever. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa 40:12). On the other hand, if they would not obey God and keep His commandments, then God says, “I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.” (v. 17).

APPEAL

Today God is calling us young people to stand up to the giants in our lives. He is calling us to be true to Him in our lives and faithful to Him as we battle temptations and trials. David said that the battle belongs to the Lord. Why? Because God was being defied. God’s will was being stonewalled. Have you given your battles to the Lord, or are you still fighting your giants on your own?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Israelites waited 40 days to begin the battle?
2. David’s faith in God caused him to look at the giant from a different perspective. How different do you think your life will be if you stop and refocus and look at daily challenges differently?
3. Do you trust that God will fight the battle for you? Are your battles His battles or are His battles to be your battles?
4. David and Goliath both had confidence. The difference was that David’s confidence was in God. How can you prevent yourself from becoming overconfident in your own ability to get things done?
5. Why do you think David needed 5 stones, and not 1?

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Forgiveness
is a gift from God.
ACCEPT IT. EMBRACE IT.



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DAY 8

To see the Invisible Through the Eye of Faith

The prince was the most eligible young man in the kingdom. Heir to vast fortunes, educated in the best schools, brilliant, good looking, strong and full of charisma, he was the most popular person in the palace.

Of course, some knew that he was just the adopted son of the princess. They had heard the story of how she rescued him from certain death—naming him Moses, because he was “drawn out” of the river, taking him as her own and hiring a Hebrew woman to care for him until he was old enough to live in the palace.

But once he was in the palace, Moses became the pride of the kingdom, destined to become Pharaoh—the most powerful person on earth.

Becoming a Pharaoh was not easy. It involved intense military training, social and diplomatic coaching, and religious instruction. All Pharaohs were required to be members of the Egyptian priestly caste.

But while Moses “was an ardent and untiring student, he could not be induced to participate in the worship of the [Egyptian] gods. He was threatened with the loss of the crown, and warned that he would be disowned by the princess should he persist in his adherence to the Hebrew faith.”¹

Lessons of Faith

During his early years while with his natural mother, Jochabed, Moses learned about the one true God—the God of his ancestors. He listened to his mother tell the faith-building stories about Abraham under the stars, Isaac’s willingness to obey no matter what the cost, and Jacob’s dream of the heavenly ladder. He learned about Joseph’s betrayal

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by his brothers into the hands of slave traders, his rise to prominence in the home of Potiphar, captain of the Egyptian guard, and of his unjust imprisonment because he chose to remain faithful to God when tempted by Potiphar's wife. Moses also knew that Joseph had walked the same royal courts before him and how, through His faithfulness, God used his royal predecessor to not only save the nation but the world during the time of famine.

The lessons of faith that Moses learned as a child stayed with him and he determined that by God's grace, he too would be faithful. No threats, and no rewards, would entice him to give up his faith in God.

In the book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, we are given a behind-the-scenes glimpse into how this young man could turn away from what appeared to be such an incredible future.

Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, 'choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'"²

By God's grace, Moses looked beyond the magnificent palace of Pharaoh and the monarch's throne to something much better. He understood the timeless truth, articulated by the apostle Paul a millennium and a half later when he wrote, ". . . *we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Cor. 3:18).³ And because, through the eye of faith, Moses saw the invisible reality of God, trusted in His promises and followed His leading, Moses is alive in heaven today (see Matt. 17:3).

Face-to-Face with Pharaoh

If you visited Egypt today, you would come face to face with the Pharaohs. Located in the Royal Mummies Hall of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, famous Pharaohs lie in their perfectly preserved mummified state. There you will find, among others, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Hatshepsut (widely believed to be the princess who adopted Moses), and the powerful Ramses II, known as Ramses the Great.

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Have you ever thought about where Moses would be today had he turned his back on God's calling and became Pharaoh instead? It's quite possible that his perfectly preserved body would be lying alongside the many other Pharaohs in the Royal Mummies Hall.

Of course, looking back, it's easy to see that Moses made the right choice. But at the time, it wasn't so clear. Had he gone with everything he saw—the splendor around him, the wealth that was his, the power that was promised—he would have been the richest, most powerful person on earth—for a while.

At the time, it must have seemed very foolish to give all that up for something he could not see—except through the eye of faith. But the Bible tells us,

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:24-27, NKJV).

Lessons to Learn

Even after making this enormously important decision, however, Moses still had several lessons to learn—and unlearn. Convinced that God had called him to deliver his people, Moses set out to do just that, in his own strength.

"Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (Exodus 2:11,12, NKJV).

We shouldn't be too quick to judge Moses. After all, he had received expert training in warfare, and he may well have believed that this was the way to win freedom for his people. Nevertheless, we know what happened next—Moses did not receive the support of his people, Pharaoh learned of the murder, and the former Egyptian prince had to flee for his life.

Then came 40 long years in the wilderness . . . watching sheep! It must have seemed to Moses that he had ruined everything. He went from the palace to the pasture, from self-made defender and deliverer to a humble fugitive. Surely, he must have asked himself, "What went wrong?"

Yet all was not lost. God had a plan for Moses—just as He has a plan for each of us.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

Fresh out of Pharaoh school, Moses was not yet ready to lead God's people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He first had to learn not to rely on his own wisdom or strength, but instead to trust in God's power for the fulfillment of His promises. He also needed to learn patience and self-denial—lessons that could only be learned away from the provisions of the palace.

In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, we read that

"The influences that had surrounded him [Moses] in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur

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of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength” (p. 248).

Rather than being wasted, God used those 40 years in the wilderness to prepare Moses for the great work of leading his people out of slavery and beyond. It was also during those quiet years that, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, Moses wrote the book of Genesis.⁴

A Sudden Call

Then suddenly, his sheep-watching life was over! God’s calls are often like that—sudden! A phone call. A text. An email. A personal invitation. In the case of Moses, God’s call came through a burning bush. And Moses wasn’t ready, or at least he thought he wasn’t ready.

“Come now . . . and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt,” God said to Moses (Ex. 3:10).

But Moses replied, *“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”* (verse. 11). The once self-sufficient prince recognized his weakness and didn’t feel up to the task God was now giving him, but God assured him, *“I will certainly be with you”* (verse 12). Moses was about to learn that “Whatever is to be done at His [God’s] command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enabling.”⁵

When Moses continued to express his reluctance, God told him that his brother, Aaron, would go with him and that *“I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do”* (Ex. 4:15). So together the two brothers went to face the mighty Pharaoh, and to set God’s people free.

Throughout his life, Moses carried with him the faith-filled ability of making choices based on eternal realities, rather than on the visible yet temporal. Even at the end of his earthly life, Moses urged the children of Israel to be faithful to God, saying, *“Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future!”* (Deut. 32:29, NASB).

Many Examples

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Moses, of course, is not the only person in the Bible who by faith looked beyond the present to the eternal. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1, we are given this very clear definition of faith: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”*.

The chapter continues with a long list of faithful men and women who chose to obey God, rather than follow the world around them. Abel, Enoch, and Noah are listed. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and more.

And the Bible says that, *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (verse 13).

Of all the examples of those who looked beyond what is seen to the promise of the unseen, that of Jesus is the most powerful. He looked with love upon every human being—not just noticing what they appeared to be, but seeing their potential in what, with His power, they could become. When He was at Jacob’s well (see John 4:5-42), He didn’t just see a Samaritan woman. He saw a person in need of hope and forgiveness, and He saw an evangelist. When His disciple, Andrew, brought to Him a little boy’s lunch by the Sea of Galilee, instead of seeing just five barley loaves and two small fish, He saw the possibility of feeding thousands—not only physically, but spiritually as well (see John 6:8-13). When He was on a fishing boat on the stormy sea, He didn’t stare at the wind and the waves, but instead rested securely in His Father’s arms (see Mark 4:37-40). And when He hung on the cross, naked and bruised, when everything looked completely hopeless, He promised the dying, repentant thief, *“You will be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). He looked beyond the temporary now to the eternal forever.

Looking Beyond

What about you? Where are you looking? Are your eyes so filled with the things that are visible—things that surround you, circumstances that envelop you, people that persuade you—that you cannot see the invisible?

It’s so easy to focus on and be motivated only by the here and now. But could it be that what seems so important now—popularity, money, sports, entertainment, fashion, worldly success, (_____), you fill in the blank—may mean nothing in eternity?

In the book of 1 John, chapter 2, the apostle urges us to, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever”* (verses 15-17, KJV).

We may not all be given the royal training of a future Pharaoh as Moses was, but we are all faced with the choice of enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25, KJV), or fixing our eyes on our eternal reward, and living our lives according to the promise.

I invite you today to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). Develop a close relationship with Him. Spend time with Him. Communicate with Him often in prayer. Hear Him speak to you through His Word—the Bible. Read His special counsels to you in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Listen to His voice leading you into active mission outreach activities and humble service for others as you participate in Total Member Involvement—Total Youth Involvement. He promises to be with you, to guide and strengthen you. And one day, I believe very soon, He will come back to take us to live with Him forever, in a place more amazing than we can imagine.

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“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Like Moses, choose today to see the invisible.

References

1. Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245.
2. Ibid.
3. Unless indicated otherwise, all Bible references are taken from the New King James Version.
4. See Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 251.
5. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 333.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How was Moses able to look beyond the allurements of the present to grasp the future by faith?
2. What does it mean to see “through the eye of faith?” Why is it important?
3. What are some concrete ways that we can increase our faith?
4. How can we balance living in this present world, and preparing for eternity?
5. Describe what you think heaven will be like? What are you looking forward to the most?

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