

Sometimes things don't work out the way we hope. In fact, sometimes we do exactly what we think God wants us to do and it turns out to be a complete disaster. For example, a young couple goes on the mission field, taking their small children with them. Despite constant opposition from their parents—who are not believers—they travel overseas to live in a remote village. Not long after they arrive, one of the children contracts a rare, life-threatening disease, and the missionaries are forced to go back home. Upon their return, their parents say, “See, we told you not to go!”

Or consider the employee who discovered corruption at his company. After agonizing over what to do, he decided that it was his duty as a Christian to report one of his coworkers for defrauding their customers. But the management wouldn't listen. Not only did they allow the corruption to continue, but the man who reported it was branded a troublemaker and was denied his promotion.

Then there was the woman who shared the gospel with her neighbor. The two women had been gradually getting to know one another, and eventually the Christian woman had an opportunity to share her testimony. Her friend listened politely, but she had no real interest in Christianity and soon changed the subject. Afterward, although they remained acquaintances, they never became close friends.

These kinds of things happen all the time. A woman refuses a man who is not a Christian; now she is still waiting for the right man, but no one ever calls. An employee refuses to work on Sundays and gets fired three months later. A mother does everything she can to raise her children right and then watches them squander her love by turning away from God. A pastor starts to teach the Bible, but rather than growing, his congregation starts to shrink. It happens often: A Christian does what God calls him to do, and it makes things worse! Such developments make us start to wonder if we did the right thing, and maybe even to wonder if God cares what happens to us.

### ***From Bad to Worse***

This is exactly what happened to Moses. Moses had done everything God commanded him to do. It took him a while to accept God's call, of course, but once he did, he was careful to do whatever God wanted him to do. From the moment he left the burning bush until the day he went to Pharaoh's palace, he did and said exactly what he was told to do and say.

Moses was at the center of God's will. So he was living the victorious spiritual life, right? Wrong! Things could hardly have gone worse than they did. Acting on God's instructions, Moses had told Pharaoh to let God's people go, but that turned out to be a complete fiasco. Not only had Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, but the demand made him so angry that he doubled their workload. Now the Israelites had to find their own straw to make Pharaoh's bricks. Not surprisingly, this setback made Moses Public Enemy #1. Now the only thing he had to show for following God was the contempt of his people, who said, “May the Lord look upon you and judge you! You have made us a

stench to Pharaoh” (Exod. 5:21a). The more Moses obeyed, the worse things got, and his worst fears were starting to come true (see Exod. 4:1–17). He had been rejected by both the Hebrews and the Egyptians. So this is a story about what happens when we try to do things God’s way and it only makes things worse. It is also a story about what to do when that happens. How should we respond when trouble comes for doing what is right?

Philip Graham Ryken, [\*Exodus: saved for God’s glory\*](#) (pp. 160–162). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.