

Sermon: “Moses: Lessons in Leadership” NSAC July 24, 2022

Series: “Old Testament Bible Characters” Pastor Dave Sattler

Texts: Various in Exodus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy

Sub-Texts: Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 11:24-26 **Sources:** Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application Bible, YouVersion. **Commentaries:** Peter Enns (Exodus) and Frank Gaebelin (Pentateuch). **Theological Reference Books:** John A Beck - “A Visual Guide to Bible Events,” William Dyrness - “Themes in Old Testament Theology.” **Articles:** *Faith Today Magazine* (July/August 2022) **Movie:** “Prince of Egypt” (1998)

I. <Slide> Introduction:

- Hi, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC continuing our Summer Series taking a look at “Old Testament Bible Characters.” Thank you for joining us today.
 - So far we’ve looked at Abraham as an example of faith, Isaac and the struggle between fear and faithfulness, Jacob and his battle for blessing, then last week we studied the wisdom of Joseph.
 - Today we come to the much-written-about Moses.
 - **Moses sets the template for all leaders of Israel to come.**
 - Many consider him the greatest leader in the Bible next to Jesus Himself.
 - Jesus even has several what one may consider ‘Moses-like moments’ in His life.
 - Moses is thought to have written the Bible’s first 5 books: the Pentateuch.
 - And Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy tell his story.
- <Prayer> “Lord, please move me out of the way. We’re hungry to hear from you.”

II. The (Lengthy) Biblical Story of Moses

1. <Slide> Baby In A Basket (Exodus 1:15-17; 2:5-10)

- Through a series of somewhat unfortunate events, including Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery, the people of Israel end up in captivity in Egypt.
- Still the Lord employs the natural resources of Egypt (like its abundance of water) and its political and economic climate to grow Jacob’s descendants into a great nation.
- Nearly 400 years later, Egypt’s King begins to see these rather-prolific foreigners as a threat. So, in effort to ‘cull’ the Israelites, Pharaoh orders the Hebrew midwives to kill all their baby boys at birth (Exodus 1:15-16).
- Similarities between the life-stories of Moses and Jesus ... at birth, both are threatened by king-ordered child genocide.
- Exodus 1:17 informs us, “The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.”

- I love it! Later, when Moses is born, his mother hides him for awhile until, fearing for his life, she floats him down the Nile in a tar-and-pitch papyrus basket ... while his sister Miriam watches in the reeds.
- **<Slide>** Exodus 2:5-10 says, “Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said. Then [rather opportunistically] his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” “Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby’s mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So [ironically] the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.”

2. **<Slide> Murderer On the Run (Exodus 2:11-15)**

- Moses grows up in the high courts of Egypt—likely receives a royal education and training in leadership. Deep down he must’ve wondered though ... ‘Who am I? Do I really belong here?’ This is the heart-cry of many adopted children.
- Soon he happens upon the injustice of his own people and Moses quickly reacts. Reacting is one of his character traits that God works with, over time ... to mould, shape, and refine.
- Oh how I can relate!
- **<Slide>** Exodus 2:11-15: “[Moses] saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” The man said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.” When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian.”

3. <Slide> God's Call From A Burning Bush (Exodus 3:12-14)

- Hiding out in Midian, Moses becomes a herdsman, gets married, and starts a family.
- Meanwhile, the people of Israel groan under the yoke of slavery. Not forgotten, God sees them, hears their cry for help, and is deeply concerned (2:23-25).
- And God's rescue plan involves summoning reluctant Moses as His leader to appeal to his brother, the new Pharaoh, to let two million Jewish slaves go free. From a burning bush God comes calling.
- And Moses makes repeated attempts to jam out of it: 'I can't do it.' 'I'm not a good public speaker.' 'They won't listen to me.' 'Send someone else.' Sound familiar?
- <Slide> Exodus 3:12-14 continues: "And God said [to Moses], "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

4. <Slide> Moses Goes Before Pharaoh (Exodus 5-11)

- Moses returns to Egypt and goes before Pharaoh to plead the case of his people. "Let my people go!" He pleads. Over and over again.
- Nevertheless, God hardens Pharaoh's heart. This won't come easy.
- Seemingly offended by Moses' repeated requests, Pharaoh makes working conditions even nastier for Jewish slaves. This further complicates things by turning the Israelite leaders against Moses.
- God then "multiplies His wonders" in Egypt: blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail ... we've had a few of these in Lynn Valley lately ... locusts, darkness, firstborn.
- These are the plagues that descend upon Egypt at God's sending.
- Still Pharaoh refuses to let God's people go.

5. <Slide> The Passover (Exodus 12:28-31)

- In a terrifying final scene in Egypt, through Moses and Aaron, to save them, God instructs His people to sacrifice a Passover lamb and mark

their doorposts with its blood. A foreshadowing of a future event ... when God the Son Jesus will shed His blood to save the world.

- Exodus 12:28-31 describes the scene: “The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested.”

6. <Slide> The Exodus (Exodus 14:21-22/30-31)

- Finally, after 430 years of captivity in Egypt, God set His people free!
- But soon, Pharaoh changes his mind and comes after them.
- To escape, “[Moses] stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left” and “when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.” (Exodus 14)
- And they all lived happily ever after, right?!!

7. <Slide> Wilderness Wanderings (Exodus 15-40/Numbers/Deuteronomy)

- Once they cross the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his army are vanquished, Moses becomes the leader of a 40 year-long camping trip for two million not-so-happy campers. I’ve led many camp-outs, but this is a tough gig!
- God must teach His people some valuable lessons. First, God wants to ‘de-program’ them from four centuries of immersion in Egyptian culture and religion. It could be said, ‘**God takes His people out of Egypt to take Egypt out of His people.**’
- The Israelites must learn how to live as God’s people. God instructs them through the giving of the law and through His own self-revelation.

- From Mt Sinai, there's a presentation (or two) of the 10 Commandments, a sacrificial system with offerings and worship, a covenant, priests, an ark, and a tabernacle to house the glory of God amongst His people. All to highlight for Israel a new way of living, post-slavery, with their Lord.
- There's a golden calf, an invasion of venomous snakes, multiple mutinies, intense battles with other nations, bogus reports from spies about the Promised Land, and even a donkey that gives his owner a talking to!
- The whole thing's a roller-coaster ride of people encountering incredible miracles of God, in one moment, and rebelling hard, the next. Just like typical church life!
- Most of these 40 years, they're (literally) circling the wilderness with the Promised Land there in plain sight, tantalizing them.
- But, in God's opinion, they're not yet ready to enter.
- And the people grumble against Moses, 'Get us outta here! Take us back. We were better off as slaves in Egypt.'

8. <Slide> Water From A Rock (Numbers 20:6-12)

- Impressing another vital lesson on His people, God says: **Trust Me to protect you and to provide for you.**
- They'll need to trust God to fight their battles and to provide manna to eat in the wilderness. Consider also the necessity of water. For the most part, in Egypt, water was in abundance; the people rarely had to worry about it. In the Promised Land, however, this would not be the case.
- Once there, Israel would need to depend on God to provide even their most basic necessity: water. And this dependence would be an ongoing struggle for all—starting with Moses himself.
- <Slide> Numbers 20 tells one of these stories: "Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.' So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised

his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.’”

- C’mon, what is happening here? Isn’t God being a little too sticky?! Any good herdsman in the ancient world knew that to strike a porous rock in this region would bring a gush of fresh water. And, the people were desperately thirsty, so why not?!
- Because, that’s not what God told Moses to do. The Lord told Moses not to hit it ... but to “speak to that rock” (v8).
- **<Slide>** Moses’ rebellion is that he chose conventional wisdom over God’s specific command. Perhaps Moses is tired of the abuse he’s taking from the people (can you feel his frustration mounting in the text?)
- And, in an effort to totally redeem himself, he ignores God’s instruction, and simply does it his way, hoping to take credit for himself, and win over the people.
- As a consequence of his rash behaviour, Moses is banned from entering the Promised Land. Isn’t God being too harsh here?
- APP – Reality is: Doing God’s work our way never gets the job done properly. And, claiming wins for ourselves, rather than giving God the glory, never satisfies. Seems there is a higher accountability for God’s leaders—a lot at stake. In a way, through the conduct of Christian leaders, the reputation of God is on the line.

9. **<Slide> Climbing Mt Nebo With God (Deuteronomy 34:4/10-12)**

- Now an old man, and nearing the end of 40 years wandering in the wilderness, Moses, along with the Lord, climbs Mt Nebo—4000 feet above the Dead Sea, and gazes at the beauty of the Promised Land.
- Deuteronomy 34:4 picks up the story, “Then the Lord said to [Moses], “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.” And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said.”

- Then a stirring eulogy to Moses, v10: “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.”
- It would be a 1000 years till the appearance of God the Son Jesus—One even greater than Moses to lead the people—and, indeed, all humanity.

III. *<Slide>* **Life Applications—Moses: Lessons in Leadership**

- Time to ‘land the plane’ now on a few application points.
- These days, when we think of leadership, it’s easy to focus on the all the bad leaders out there—the ones who’ve disappointed or hurt us.
- The calling to leadership can be daunting, the mantle cumbersome to carry—why many shy away from entering the arena.
- When it comes to leadership, what’s to learn from Moses?

A. *<Slide>* **Responding well, not simply reacting. (Exodus 17:10-12)**

- What’s clear throughout his life is that Moses cannot walk away. When he sees a problem he reacts.
- ILL — Impetuous by nature, I have learned, I am learning (more accurate) that my snap-reactions escalate problems rather than fix them.
- Exodus 17 tells one of my favourite Bible Stories—and it involves Moses!
- Early on in the wilderness, the Israelites happen upon a fierce, poaching, raider tribe known to kill for pleasure and profit.
- And Moses employs an unorthodox battle plan.
- Instead of everybody fighting the Amalekites, it says: “Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.” (v10-12)
- And they win the battle, or more accurately, God wins the battle as they looked to Him to fight their battles for them. Here, by his conduct, Moses allows God his rightful place as the Main Character of the story.

- APP — Not simply reacting, but responding well is a learned exercise, a leadership savvy, refined by God in the fire of challenging situations—should we choose to accept the Lord’s shaping.
- Patiently and wisely responding to difficult situations, and difficult people, flows out of seeing the big picture, enlisting the help of others, and the inner conviction that our battles truly belong to the Lord.
- Rather than simply reacting to things, may the Lord grant us, as leaders, the ability to respond well.

**B. <Slide> Working through the sting of God’s discipline.
(Proverbs 3:11-12)**

- There’s a certain humility God longs to grow in His people—especially His beloved leaders. And the process of God doing this certainly can sting. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, Q: “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in.”
- APP — The question is: how will we respond to God’s loving discipline?
- Under the sting of God’s rebuke, Moses works through it—doesn’t run away from God or wallow too long in self-pity. Notice Moses doesn’t say ‘This isn’t what I signed up for, God! I’m outta here!’ Well maybe he said it, but he never acts on it.
- From my vantage point, I have seen many leaders respond poorly to discipline—in the hurt, some have even fallen further off the rails.
- Much of my life I have responded poorly to discipline—become defensive, sunk in my disappointment and resentment, or simply checked out. This is not how God designs it.
- When we humbly accept the rebuke of God, or trusted others, when we are receptive to feedback (even the tough words), it opens us up to growth and maturity and further rounds us into the leaders God invites us to be.

**C. <Slide> Encountering God Face-to-Face (Exodus 33:11/
Hebrews 11:24-26)**

- APP/ILL — Many people step into leadership having massive identity issues. And, leadership roles can fill that void—at least temporarily.
- Nearly all my life I have found myself in a leadership role. In my 20s and 30s, I wanted to be the man. Didn’t listen well. Loved the sound of my

own voice. Felt alive in the spotlight. Thought I knew everything. Did it myself. Believed God was lucky to have me on His team. Truth be told, a lot of my leadership practices were rooted in my deep needy-ness.

- Exodus 33:11 says, “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.” Wow! Remarkable. I want that!
- What impact does this have on Moses and his leadership?
- I suggest that Moses’ unique and intimate relationship with the Lord anchors his sense of identity. His coming face to face with God keeps him afloat amidst all of his life and leadership ups and downs.
- And I am grateful to God, now, for His patience with me; and for providing leadership mentors, friends, and the Arrow Christian Leadership Program that, in the mid-2000s, took me apart and, lovingly with God’s help, put me back together again!
- Spending time in the presence of the Lord these days, more and more I’ve come to know who God made me to be—who I truly am. And, I embrace it, and am a far better (or at least healthier) leader as a result.
- **<Slide>** Here’s the point: The Christian Story defines our identity.
- Beyond gender, race, socio-economic status, age, success, or giftedness, **the God of the Christian Story clearly defines us as “dearly loved children of our Heavenly Father.” We do well to sit and find our identity here in God’s presence.**
- Hebrews 11:24-26 says, Q: “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”
- **<Slide>** APP — I know there are many leaders here with us today.
- Parent, coach, business, teacher, church whatever leadership role we find ourselves in ... when we come to truly embrace our identity in Christ, we won’t need to grasp for it as much from our world—or attempt to make a name for ourselves via achievement or success.
- Face to face with our Heavenly Father, we can rest in the identity God’s given us ... that no leadership failure can ever disrupt, and for which no leadership success can ever compensate! Amen.