

GOD, MOSES, & THE EXODUS

"LET MY PEOPLE GO!!!"

OCT 14, 2007

Basic MEMORY VERSES

OT: Exodus 6:7 (NRSV)

[God said,] I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you..."

NT: Luke 4:18a (NRSV)

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor."

Luther ("Freedom of a Christian" 1520)

"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

Freed - to serve. In Isaiah 55:8, the prophet writes that God's thoughts and ways are not our ways (v. 8). Repeatedly, the Bible teaches us that God chooses someone only to send them away from their comfort zone to incubate them, if you will, often for a very long time. When God decides they are ready they are then thrown into surprising new lives that require patience, faith, and perseverance - all to further God's plan to redeem humanity.

From the Patriarch and Matriarch stories in Genesis 12-50 (see the box "Thoughts to Grown On") and now to Moses in the book of Exodus, we learn that God uses flawed, flighty, and often questionable people to send God's flawed, flighty, and often questionable leader into dilemma, mold them from the experience, and then finally calls them to their role in God's overarching plan, often to resistance.

God's pattern of choice, removal, strengthening through testing, and calling to unexpected roles, repeats in God's unveiling of The Plan through Christ Jesus. God chose to enter humanity in the most unassuming position - viewed as a lowly carpenter's son. Jesus' ministry begins with his baptism and then immediately he withdraws to the wilderness of temptation, struggling against the human desires for self-satisfaction, grandeur, and power. His short three-year ministry was a continual battle against prevailing powers and mindsets, as he lived God's commandment in his whole being to keep God first in life, and love for others second. God's final role in God's own plan: the assumption of human death so that humanity may have life. Not your typical human plan to save the world - lose to the lesser powers through the most vile form of torture and humiliation, ostensibly disproving what God had proved with Moses and Pharaoh - God is in complete control of creation, and of life.

Thanks be to God that God's ways are not our ways! For, though the servanthood of ultimate love for others, God reversed the damage created in Eden by our rational decision to benefit ourselves. Just as God chose to liberate the Israelite nation and become their God, so Jesus' death liberates us all from the slavery to sin and death. And just as Jesus took our place in death as the all-time sinner, so our baptism into his death and resurrection joins us to Jesus' place as God's chosen children, inheritors of life with God forever.

For Luther, this is the apex of the Bible: by having Christ sharing our identity, and by being gifted Christ's identity, we are freed. Such a simple statement with huge consequences: Freed for what? It can't be for ourselves, as that's what caused the rift with God in the first place. Luther took Paul's writings to heart: God frees us from worrying about our future so we allow God to use our life up for others - so that when our earthly life is over there is nothing we have been hoarding back for ourselves. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Definitely not a typically human concept, but God's paradox that the ultimate freedom only comes through being God's servant to the world.

Advanced MEMORY VERSES

OT: Exodus 6:7-8, (NRSV)

7 I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord." (Bonus: verses 1-6)

NT: Luke 4:17b-21 (NRSV)

17... [Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Bonus: verses 14-17)

Luther ("Freedom of a
Christian" 1520)

"To make the way smoother for the unlearned - for only them do I serve - I will set down the following two propositions concerning the freedom and the bondage of the spirit: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they can be shown to fit together they would serve our purpose perfectly. Both are Paul's own statements, who says in I Corinthians 9:19, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all." and in Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to the one loved. So Christ, although he was Lord of all, was "born of woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4), and so was at the same time a free man and a servant, "in the form of God" and "of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7)."

A PRAYER for This Week

Most Holy and Wonderful God.

You chose Israel as your nation through which the world would be blessed, and awed all with your power over creation and life.

You chose me as your child, and I am in awe that you would stoop to see me.

Help me to recognize that you desire all people to declare you God, and help me to treat all I meet as your special and holy children, dying to hear your words of freedom and love.

In Christ's name and by your Holy Spirit I pray,

Amen.

Track the Families

The story from Abraham in Canaan to Moses in Egypt is one of God choosing and using quirky humans who excelled in sibling rivalry, and trickery:

- ✦ **Gen 12-23) Abraham** had two boys: **Ishmael** (by Abe & Sarah's meddling for a mother: **Hagar**) – who fathered the Arab nations, and **Isaac** (by God's choice for mother: **Sarah**) – who fathered the Hebrew nation. Parental squabbling started a legendary sibling rivalry continuing still.
- ✦ **(Gen 24-27) Isaac** had two boys: **Esau** and **Jacob**. **Jacob**, and his mom, **Rebekah**, finagled Esau's birthright away from him and Jacob inherited the clan (Gen). Sibling rivalry abetted by Mom is a fearsome force (see Isaac & Ishmael).
- ✦ **(Gen 28-36) Jacob** (renamed **Israel** by God after they wrestled in Gen 32), tried to marry **Rachel** but was tricked by his father-in-law **Laban** to marrying her sister (**Leah**) first. The sisterly rivalry was over which one (plus their maids) birthed the most kids by Jacob. Jacob ended up with 12 boys and 1 daughter (**Dinah**) – but is favorite was boy #11: **Joseph**, Rachel's first child.
- ✦ **(Gen 37-50) Joseph** relished being his rich Daddy's pet, to the consternation of his brothers. The bros retaliated by selling Joe into slavery. Joe ended up in Egypt, where God's gift of dream translation landed him an advisory job with Pharaoh, rationing grain for a famine. Lucky for the brothers, their slavery plan backfired and Joe saved their hides from starvation. Abraham's descendents now immigrated to Egypt.
- ✦ **(Exodus 1)** For 400 years, the descendents of Israel's 12 boys (**the 12 tribes of Israel**) lived in Egypt and multiplied – to the point that Pharaoh deemed them a national security threat. His solution: slavery and abuse.
- ✦ **(Exodus 2-11) God** heard the cries of Abraham's descendents, and implemented a plan. God chose **Moses**, the baby of a poor, Hebrew slave family, raising him first in Pharaoh's palace and then maturing him on the plains raisin a family and sheep, to stand up to Pharaoh and prove to all who was God. Through Moses God led Abraham's descendents, the **Israelite nation** out of slavery in Egypt.
- ✦ **(Exodus 3)** God reminded the Israelites that God chose and liberated *them*, and that *God* was now their God, just as through baptism God chooses and liberates *us*, and reminds us that *God* is now our God.

Activities & Questions to Ponder

Create space and time when family faith dialogue can develop and flourish.

The activities suggested below are listed from younger to older, to foster faith activities at home, or in the car, and to help reinforce the week's lesson.

- ✦ Family kitchen project: make an edible Moses in his Basket. Make blue Jello and pour into a clear cup. When set, squirt a small dollop of canned whipped cream to create the basket. Add a grape for Moses' body and a slice of fruit (banana, apple, etc) for his head. Stick pretzel sticks on end around the cup to make the bull rushes. Add a spoon and enjoy! Find more Moses craft ideas at: (<http://daniellesplace.com/html/Bible%20Themes%20-%20Moses.html>), or search for "Moses Craft Activities" with your favorite browser.
- ✦ How can we help "liberate" others who feel "oppressed" today? While we can see we need to work for oppressed people around the world, there are also people near us who are "bound" to "oppressive" loneliness, fears, hatred, behavior, depression, etc. Whom do you know who needs your help this week? What kinds of things can you do to help them? Think small and big. With the help of parents and friends – choose at least one option and Do It!
- ✦ Moses didn't want to listen to God's call – he was happy where he was, and was scared no one would listen to him. Create a reflection project (art, music, poem, etc) on Moses arguing with God over such a huge and scary responsibility, and how Moses may have felt when God listened to his fears and gave him help to do the task. What fears do you have that you can take to God in prayer, knowing that God will give you what you need to step out in faith?
- ✦ What does it mean that God only liberated one group of people from slavery under an oppressive regime, but left others in the world at the time still living in inhumane conditions? Compare and contrast the Exodus of the Israelite nation, to Jesus' death on the cross.
- ✦ As God liberated God's chosen from slavery in Egypt, so God promises that Jesus' death liberates all of humanity from slavery to sin. The Bible says sin no longer carries the wages of death – but who gets this benefit? Do you need to believe to receive Christ's inheritance of eternal life? Debate both sides: (1) why God would require people to believe if, as Luther said, people cannot believe until God gifts them faith vs. (2) Eternal life is there for everyone – Christ's death means everyone goes to heaven as they are all now reconciled back to God. Christians throughout the ages have hotly debated this very topic – what reasons can you find for *both* sides of the argument? What is your stand today?
- ✦ What is faith? What does it mean to believe God's promise that Christ's death is for you? Can you? Do you? If you are comfortable, express your feelings and understandings of God's promises, as of today, with a group you trust.



http://www.toonfever.com/toons2004_0911.htm

Christian Freedom

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LIVESTOCK
LOCUST
LORD
LUTHER
MOSES
NONE
PERFECTLY
PLAGUES
SERVANT
SUBJECT