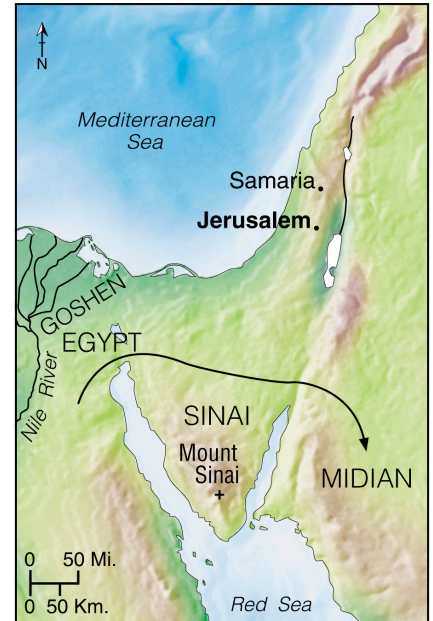


Moses - "The Myth Of Indispensability"

"Building Blocks"

1. **(Background)** Moses is one of the key "players" in the biblical drama. His name appears 852x in our Bibles, 90% of them are in the Old Testament, and the majority of *those* in the five books attributed to him known as the Torah, or the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy). His life falls rather neatly into three periods of equal length but very unequal quality:

- **Phase I** – birth to age 40 (Ex 2:11-14; Acts 7:23)
- **Phase II** – age 41 to age 80 (Ex 2:15-25; Acts 7:30)
- **Phase III** – age 81 to age 120 (Deut 34:7; Acts 7:36)



Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Providential preservation; Moses' life is not only spared, but he is exalted by becoming son to the Pharaoh (Ex 1:22; 2:1-10)	Moses lives in the wilderness of Midian (an ancient ancestor; Gen 25:2,4; 1 Chron 1:32ff) and tends sheep. This phase begins with Moses "delivering" his future wife, Zipporah from some abusive shepherds (Ex 2:16-22).	Moses confronts Pharaoh and in a series of miracles over a number of years, coerces him to allow the Hebrew slaves to leave Egypt (Ex 5-12).
He receives a world-class "Ivy League" education (cf. 1 Kg 4:30 and Acts 7:22); most likely in literature, math and warfare	While keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses travels to Mt. Sinai (Horeb) where he encounters Yahweh and receives an "official" call to be a "deliverer" of the Hebrews in Egypt via a burning bush (Ex 3:1-4:17).	Moses leads the Hebrews through the Red Sea and after around 7 weeks of travelling, they arrive at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex 12-18).
He grows in his sense of solidarity and identity with the Hebrew slave population and seeks to be a "deliverer" apart from God's call on his life (Ex 2:11-15)	Moses returns to Egypt at age 80 to "deliver" the Hebrews from bondage.	While at Sinai, Moses receives "the Law" and all the instructions about priests, sacrifices, and the Tabernacle (Ex 19-40; Lev 1-27; Num 1-10:10).
He flees Egypt for his life, (his "father" is seeking to kill him) and goes into exile in the land of Midian (Ex 2:15).		•The Israelites leave Mt. Sinai and travel to Kadesh Barnea where a contingent of spies rebels after a mission into Canaan. God punishes the Jews by forcing them to wander for 40 years. The second generation arrives at the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan and Moses gives the Law a second time (Deut).

2. **(Background)** Moses is a persistent figure in the biblical narrative. He doesn't "fade" when the Old Testament canon closes. He is on the Mt. of Transfiguration with Elijah and Jesus (Lk 9:1-4), and the "Song of Moses" is one of 2 songs being sung in heaven (Rev 15:3).
3. **(Q1a)** This was Moses' idea, *not* Yahweh's or even the Hebrews he involved himself with! This initial effort at "deliverance" involved violence, and his second the next day, involved diplomacy. Both failed. The end product was animosity with Pharaoh and disdain from his fellow Hebrews. These two realities

would face Moses again forty years later when Yahweh sends him back. This is important because of our natural tendency to think that if God's "in" something, He'll create a smooth path for our obedience.

4. **(Q1b)** The predicted outcomes by Jethro were for everyone, not just Moses:
 - God's guidance in Moses' life
 - endurance for Moses (to finish the journey)
 - peace for all the people
5. **(Q1a-e)** There are five different expressions of the "I'll do it myself!" attitude in these passages:
 - Taking on others' problems when neither they *nor* God have invited me to.
 - Assuming sole responsibility for something that I can not sustain alone.
 - Putting so much effort into my ministry that I actually reduce my total effectiveness by shortening my length of involvement (i.e. *not* "finishing the race")
 - Drawing attention to myself in ministry and service.
 - Blaming God in the midst of the "trail of obedience" when things become what I never thought they would.
6. **(Q2)** Moses' constant complaining and questioning of God (e.g. "Why?" – Ex 5:22; 32:11; Nu 11:11) was the same thing the Jews were doing to Moses ("Why?" – Ex 14:11; 17:3; Nu 16:3; 21:5). This is really only a version of blaming.
7. **(Q3b)** "Honoring God" is first and foremost an attitude of the heart, but one that also finds expression in verbal statements of gratitude towards God:

"The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" Psalms 50:23

There is a counterfeit "honor" of God that involves our lips but not our hearts

"And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men," Isaiah 29:13

I believe Moses dishonored God with *both*. A modern effort to honor God is the "I Am Second" campaign (www.iamsecond.com). Colt McCoy made an "I Am Second" video in October 2009 and was given a chance to prove it in January 2010)

8. **(Q3c)** Moses and Aaron turned what was supposed to be a quiet act of gracious provision by Yahweh to meet a legitimate need into a spectacle in which Moses shamed the Hebrews, made he and Aaron into celebrities, and concluded with a piece of "showmanship" outside Yahweh's original script.
9. **(Q5)** There is no written record of Moses blaming Yahweh or showing a lack of trust in Him anywhere in Scripture. (That's why the incident at Meribah *couldn't* have had to do with the "method" of the miracle.) But, *we are* privy to numerous accounts of Moses pouring out his complaint *in the presence of the LORD privately* (although it is possible that Aaron or Joshua may have observed some of this, the people did not). This is the proper way for a leader to express her/his frustration in the midst of obedience—privately to the One responsible.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q1c)** This is *not* an issue of expediency or merely efficiency! Jethro doesn't suggest better "waiting lines" (like banks and amusement parks). He suggests more judges *and* a hierarchy of need assessment, all with the goal of allowing Moses time to devote to issues suited to his skill, wisdom and experience.

This is similar to Peter's statement in the days of the early church, "*It's not right that we should neglect the ministry of the word and prayer to wait on tables*" (Acts 6:2)

2. **(Q1b)** Every "need" does *not* constitute a "call." As hard as it was for Moses to surrender either the "personal touch" or total control, it was what God wanted.
3. **(Q1d)** It is tempting to link Moses' punishment with *striking* the rock rather than "talking" to it (Ex 20:8,11). However, Moses' sin was refusing to "...*believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people.*" Moses' sin was *not* in his method, but in his motive. Moses exalted himself rather than God. He makes no mention of the Lord providing, only he and Aaron ("*Hear now, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?*").
4. **(Q3c)** Sometimes we believe that if God wasn't "in" on what we did, He wouldn't have blessed us (or our ministry). This event is an excellent example of Yahweh using a servant who's *so disobedient* that it will cost him his life and entrance into the Promised Land, to bless His people! Results (or lack of) in ministry prove nothing about whether or not God is pleased with what we're doing.
5. **(Q6)** The temptation here would be to only identify with Moses' struggle. Don't get stuck there or allow your group to. Move *further* into what Moses actually *did* with his feelings. He vented to Yahweh, and Yahweh listened patiently, and then gave counsel. We live in a culture—Christian as well as pagan—that either gets stuck in the despair cycle, or "vents" to all the wrong people; typically everyone *except* God! This "venting" is dishonoring to God because it's a form of backdoor blaming. After all, He's the One who brought on what we're facing, or didn't prevent its appearance!
6. **(Q9)** Be careful here to be sensitive to your *group* as a whole. It would be easy for everyone to be thinking of someone *outside* the group, or even of themselves. Those who are thinking of themselves need to *share* the burden with the group. Those thinking of someone *outside* the group need to be open to the fact that God may be trying to open their eyes to a need right in front of them.



"Going Deeper"

1. **(Q1)** "Which of the five examples of Moses' tendency to "do it my way" can you identify with the most? Why?"
2. **(Q1b)** "God spoke clearly to Moses through an unbeliever. Has God ever done that for you? Are you "listening" for the voice of God in the unbelievers in your life?"
3. **(Q2)** "When was the last time you blamed God for something in your life? Can you think of a time when you blamed someone else for something, when it was really God you were frustrated with?"
4. **(Q3)** "Someone has said, '*All bitterness is ultimately towards God.*' What do you think they mean by that statement? Do you think it's true?"
5. **(Q3b)** "It's possible that God accused Moses and Aaron of only *one* thing: "*...not believing in me...*" How would failing to "honor God" in the eyes of other expose a heart of unbelief?"
6. **(Q3d)** "What does this incident with Moses have to say to the idea of Christian 'celebrities' (e.g. athletes, singers, preachers, etc.)?"
7. **(Q3e)** Have group members share here. There will likely be a variety of responses. The focus however, is on this issue of who's *really* "on stage." Who gets the applause? Who gets asked to do an encore?"
8. **(Q8)** Take time to allow group members to share on this one. Perhaps even prepare in advance so there is time to break-up into pairs to share, pray and be accountable.