

October 11-15, 2021 Edition

The "BIG Story" Of The Bible #73

The Gospel According To Moses #2.4

The LORD Of Salvation

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we are continuing to look at the Gospel According To Moses- a series looking at the book of Exodus and the life of Moses- but before we do that let's reset and remember where we are in relation to the story of the Bible and God's plan to redeem the planet through His Son, Jesus. We started out looking at the story of creation and God's great dream to create a beautiful, perfect planet upon which would live the humans He would create to be His family. A family that He could love and enjoy forever and a family who could love and enjoy Him forever. As we signed off after that first week we saw that God looked down and stated that everything He saw was "very good."

But it didn't stay perfect for long. The next week we watched as Adam & Eve short circuited God's plans by deciding that they knew better about what was going to make them happy and fulfilled than God did. They were tricked by the serpent into eating the forbidden fruit and not only did the human relationship between heaven and earth get short circuited but every other relationship was impacted as well- the relationship of human to human, the relationship of human to the physical world, even our relationship with ourselves was impacted and we are still dealing with the fall out of "the fall". At the end of that story we watched as God made the serpent a promise (a promise that was not so good news for the serpent but great news for humans the created universe as well).

I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your descendants and her descendants will be enemies. One of her descendants will crush your head, and you will bite his heel. Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

God said that He would send a Descendant of the woman's and that this Descendant would be hurt by the serpent when His heel was struck but that in the process the Descendant would crush the head of the snake. The very first prophecy in the Bible and one that points right at the heart of Jesus and the cross.

With Abraham God begins to make good on this promise. He tells Abraham that He will give him a son and that through this son all the nations of the earth would be blessed. That through Abraham God would make a family that would eventually become a great nation and that through that nation God would fulfill His promise to the serpent. So the promise flows from Abraham through his youngest son, Isaac. Then the promise flows from Isaac through his youngest son, Jacob. Jacob seems like an unlikely guy to be God's chosen. He is shifty, dishonest and dishonoring to his own father. God tells Jacob that He is going to bless him, protect him, be with him wherever he goes and bring him back to the land promised to Abraham and Isaac but it doesn't stop Jacob from continuing his dishonest ways. Eventually Jacob ends up in a literal wrestling match with God Himself and during that night of conflict Jacob finally sees what is missing in his life- he asks for God's blessing. So God changes Jacob's name to, Israel, which means he-who-wrestles-with-God.

"Your name will no longer be Jacob... It is now Israel, because you have struggled with both God and men and have won." Genesis 32:27-28 (NCV)

It's a turning point for this man who up until now has wrestled "against" God but now has learned to wrestle "with" God. A subtle grammatical difference but a HUGE practical difference in Jacob's (now Israel's) life.

Next we learned about one of Israel's sons- a man named Joseph. He is not the one through whom the promise of God will flow as it concerns the Descendant who would rescue the earth and its people from the impact of sin- that promise will flow through a man named Judah- another of Israel's 12 sons- but without Joseph's influence God's dream to send the Descendant through Abraham's family may have died in that generation because of an impending famine that could have wiped out much of the ancient world. We watched as Joseph started to become a spoiled, arrogant, narcissistic punk but that through a series of experiences and tragedies he would transform (with God's help) into one of the greatest men who has ever lived. A man that because of his integrity, selflessness and forgiveness almost single handedly saved not only Egypt and the rest of the ancient world but his own family as well- the very ones who had betrayed him.

Israel (Jacob) and his family were moved to Egypt where they rode out the famine and they settled down in a part of Egypt known as Goshen. And as we turn the page from the last chapter of the book of Genesis to the first page of the book of Exodus 400 years transpires in a moment for us. During that 400 years the children of Israel thrive and flourish and multiply until they are no longer just a small family (if you can call someone with 12 sons and a daughter "small"), now they are a great nation of well over a million people still living in Egypt. And Moses begins the book of Exodus with an ominous statement:

Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. Exodus 1:8 (NLT)

And that brings us to where we are this week- the children of Israel still living in Egypt but now living in bondage as slaves. The first two chapters of Exodus have almost no mention of God in them. Only twice is He mentioned in the midst of all the misery and pain. Why does Moses do this? Maybe he's trying to give the story the feel of real life? After all, when we are going through the toughest days of our own lives don't we often feel like God is nowhere to be found? But the message of the book of Exodus is going to be- even when it seems like God's not present and not working, He is both present and working. It's just not easy for us to see it...

Tuesday Reflection: The book of Exodus starts off with this statement:

Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. Exodus 1:8 (NLT)

It's eerily similar to passages written in Egyptian histories. For years Biblical skeptics scoffed at the idea that a Hebrew like Joseph could have risen to such a high position in Egyptian government. The Egyptians were extremely ethnocentric and would have never allowed someone like Joseph to have such authority, right? And the truth is, they are and were right. In fact, for years Bible believers apologized for this story. "Yeah... we know it's almost impossible for this to have happened but it's in the Bible so what are you going to do?" Then archeologists uncovered some interesting information- Egypt had been invaded and conquered during the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and (wait for it...) Joseph. It is now widely believed that the Pharaoh who Joseph interpreted the dreams for and was given so much power in his government was not a "true" Egyptian but a Hyksos invader who didn't care what nationality Joseph was as long as he could help him maintain control. The reason scholars didn't know about

the Hyksos is that Egyptians couldn't abide anything negative in their histories. When they retook control of their nation they would have scoured any mention of the conquerors from the history books. What they would do instead is write something like, "And then 400 years of darkness fell across the land after which a new Pharaoh arose who... (knew nothing of Joseph?)". Actually that might be better interpreted, " a new Pharaoh arose who not only didn't care about what Joseph did for Egypt but considered Joseph and his people to be collaborators and so decided to punish them for daring to help the Hyksos."

With that in mind it makes total sense why this new Pharaoh did what he did. It wasn't just that he wanted slaves (although I'm sure it was a great fringe benefit). He really was concerned (and for good reason) that if the Hyksos ever rallied their forces and came back to attack Egypt again the collaborators (the children of Israel) would rise up and help them take back Egypt. And so Pharaoh began a systematic process of cultural assimilation and slavery. He asked the midwives to kill any Jewish boy that they delivered. They wouldn't do it and so Pharaoh abandoned the sneaky route and just decreed that any Hebrew baby boy was to be thrown into the Nile river. Let the girls live but kill the boys. In this way the nation of Israel would be assimilated into Egyptian culture as the girls had nobody to marry other than non-Jewish men.

But it didn't work. In fact, it backfired. Because if the policy of infanticide had never been instituted then Moses would have never had to have been put into a basket and sent down the Nile river where he would be found by the Pharaoh's daughter and raised as her own son. Moses would never have been taught how to be a general, a judge, an administrator and a politician- exactly the kind of person God needed to turn a group of over a million slaves into a nation. And as we get ready next week to study how God convinces Pharaoh to release the children of Israel (a lot of which was incredibly brutal stuff that often makes us question how God could do such a thing) I hope that whenever you find yourself being shocked by the brutality of the actions God is forced into you will keep in your mind the picture of the Hebrew baby boys being tossed into the Nile river where they were eaten by crocodiles. Pharaoh is about to be taught the lesson that we harvest what we plant.

And that's where we are. This week we will study how Moses became Moses. How he went from a man who struggled to believe God could do anything through him to the man who fearlessly stood before Pharaoh and demanded that he let the Israelites go. To get ready for that study let's finish off today reading the wiki notes on Moses' life from Hebrews chapter 11.

It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command. It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. Hebrews 11:23-27 (NLT)

Wednesday Reflection: What do you think of when you hear the name, Moses? Most of us picture Charelton Heston facing down the Pharaoh (LET MY PEOPLE GO!!!) or standing calmly before the Red Sea and telling the Israelites to calm down and watch as God saved them

from the approaching Egyptian army. But he didn't start out that way. In fact, he starts out a little flaky. So what changed Moses into the kind of guy that we now remember him to be? Well, the writer of Hebrews uses three verbs when giving us the wiki notes on Moses' life. And these three verbs changed Moses into the man he became. The important lesson for us is, these same three verbs will also transform us if we will incorporate them into our own lives. And the first verb is, "chose".

Moses made a decision and that's important to recognize. The Bible can leave out details that we wish like crazy we had. We don't know everything but we know that Moses made a decision:

He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. Hebrews 11:24 (NLT)

Now if you've read the story in Exodus- a sort of auto-biographical piece written by Moses himself you know that his decision to choose God's side wasn't implemented in the best or most successful of ways. He decided to kill an Egyptian guard who was abusing a fellow Israelite. Why? We'll never know this side of Heaven. Maybe he thought he would start the uprising his grandfather worried about that began this whole slavery thing for the Israelites. But if that's what he thought he was sadly mistaken. The Israelites didn't thank him for killing that guard- they resented him for thinking he could be one of them when he had been raised as a prince of Egypt.

So he goes from having two nations to having none overnight. And what I see is that Moses thought that he was doing the right thing when he killed that Egyptian- that he honestly believed it was doing things God's way but he was wrong. And that obvious demonstration of immaturity and arrogance was something God could not work with. But that didn't mean God was done with Moses- He just had to give him some specific training that he couldn't get in Egypt. It is true that because of his position in the Egyptian royal family he had access to some of the best training the world had to offer- training he'd need to lead a group of over one million people from their enslavement in Egypt to the land promised to their ancestor Abraham. He would have been trained as a general, an administrator, a judge, a politician and more. All of that was great but there was one part of Moses' education that was missing.

So God led Moses out of Egypt and into the wilderness of Midian where Moses was able to complete the last part of his training- as a shepherd. That's right. A shepherd. That was the missing component. What is it about a shepherd that is so valuable when it comes to leading God's people? Humility. If anything will teach you humility it's a bunch of sheep. They don't care who you are. They don't care where you grew up. They really don't care about much except doing whatever they are intent on doing at any given minute. Sounds an awful lot like the people Moses will eventually have to deal with when he finally is ready and leads God's people out of Egypt but that's another story for another time. As it turns out humility is the one leadership skill that God's leaders must possess and Moses learned his lesson well:

Now Moses was very humble-more humble than any other person on earth. Numbers 12:3 (NLT)

But humility isn't necessarily what we think it is. It's not thinking poorly of yourself- it's letting God set the pace and direction of your life. It's stepping out in faith when God says to step even if that step looks scary or wrong. When the Bible says Moses was more humble than anyone else what it's saying is, even if God asked Moses to face something as obviously unpassable as say...

oh I don't know... maybe the Red Sea- he would plant his feet and set his jaw and point into the sea itself and shout to all those who would follow him, "FORWARD!" That's humility. And Moses had it. How about you? What would you say your HQ is (humility quotient)? I'm not talking about knowing what God is asking you to do- that's a whole other skill set. What I'm talking about is doing what you already know that God has asked you to do. Love the unloveable. Forgive the unforgivable. Accept the unacceptable. Live a life of integrity even if doing so would mean you don't get everything you think you want/need. How are you doing with that? Yeah... me too. It's tough. But what God is looking for is people who are willing to choose His way before they even know what His way will necessarily entail. It's not easy but it will lead to a life you never dreamed was possible.

I mean, think about Moses. When he left Egypt he had to figure his dreams of being a great leader of men were over. He would no longer lead in Egypt and the idea that he could ever lead the Israelites had to be gone (he thought) as well. He had chosen God's way and now God was leading him into a life of obscurity in the desert. And for 40 years God leaves Moses there in Midian being a shepherd. But eventually the time came when everything (including Moses) was ready and because he was willing to go into obscurity for God he ended up getting more influence than he could possibly have ever imagined. But he wouldn't have gotten any of it had he been unwilling to listen to God and do what seemed like career suicide to him.

I have watched as the same principle plays out over and over again in my own life and many of yours. When we're willing to do what God asks even if it looks like it's going to get us the opposite of what we think we need/want then God often gives us more than we ever dreamed was possible. The lesson is how humility is taught and increased. The next time God asks you to do something that seems crazy do it and then wait for Him to eventually make something bigger and greater out of your sacrifice than simply getting what you thought you wanted would ever have given you.

But be patient- it took Moses 40 years.

Thursday Reflection: So the first verb used in Hebrews 11 that explains how Moses was transformed into the man who would lead the Israelites out of Egypt and more importantly (although we have a hard time admitting this) someone who had an incredibly close, intimate relationship with the Creator of the Universe was that he "chose". He decided to go God's way rather than the way that makes the most sense from a human standpoint. But why? What made him "choose" God over Pharaoh and Egypt and the comfort/power/pleasure they offered him? Well it wasn't just a reckless decision and he didn't flip a coin or roll any dice to make that choice. In fact the Bible says that he "evaluated" the two options:

He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt. Hebrews 11:24 (NLT)

Now I know it's hard to see in the English translation of this verse but where it says he "thought" it was better- that word means he weighed the two sides and chose based on his analysis. It wasn't just a "I'd better do what God says or I'm going to go to hell" thing either- Moses truly believed he was making the better choice.

When we have jewelry we need to sell we don't try to assess its value on our own (unless we are jewelry experts). We take the valuables to an expert and have them assay the value. The same is true for real estate. You can sell your home for as much as you can get someone else to give you for it but if that someone needs a bank loan then the bank is going to demand that a valuation is done determining how much your home is truly worth based on the condition of your home and the comparable sales of other homes in your neighborhood. And for that the banks will not rely on your expert/amateur opinion. They will find someone who does this for a living and can assign an accurate value for your home.

That's what the writer of Hebrews says Moses did when he realized he couldn't remain a prince-of-Egypt and serve God at the same time. He had to make a choice. We know what choice he made but the verb used in today's scripture explains why he made the choice he made- it was the smart move. He would "earn" more over time with God even if his short term outlook may have seemed bleak. Randy Alcorn has a little book that he wrote called *The Treasure Principle* in which he talks about living-for-the-line rather than living-for-the-dot. He quotes Jesus to make this comparison:

Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is. Matthew 6:19-21 (CEV)

Randy Alcorn explains it this way- our lives are like a tiny dot on this paper. Smaller than the size of a period like this:

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But eternity is like a line that goes all the way across the paper where it stops from our perspective but imagine it keeps on going- the line extends off of the paper and keeps going. Point the line at the sky:

Now imagine that line extends through the roof of your house and continues up into the sky past the cloud eventually leaving our atmosphere and passing the moon and all the planets in our solar system eventually leaving the solar system, the galaxy and even the universe. That line is eternity. It is where you will spend the VAST majority of your existence. Randy Alcorn says that what Jesus is suggesting in Matthew 6 when He says don't store up treasures on earth is, don't live for the dot.

We all live "in" the dot but it doesn't mean we have to live exclusively "for" the dot. Jesus would advise us to live "in" to dot but live "for" the line. That doesn't mean we don't save for the future or that we can't have "nice things" (my mom would say I am the reason she couldn't have nice things while I was growing up- and please don't ask her about her "good scissors"). It simply means that when God's values are threatened by the standards of the world we choose God's way even if it looks like to do so would be painful. That's living for the dot. Trusting that Jesus knows what He's talking about even though to follow through on His values looks scary or just plain upside down.

That's what Moses did- he could have chosen to live for the dot and spent his short time on this earth in absolute luxury and pleasure but he stepped back and looked at the bigger picture- he

looked at the line and decided after evaluating both kinds of lives that it just made more sense to live for the line. He decided it was stupid to live only for the dot. He decided to choose God's way.

It's the same thing that the apostle Paul did when faced with the decision of continuing down the path he had always been on- the path he had put so much energy and time into perfecting- or going with Jesus. Jesus wasn't into resumes. He didn't much care about the things that the people in Paul's world put so much value on. Paul was a highly educated, perfectly bred "Jew". Jesus didn't care that much about that- just look at the people He chose to be His apostles and you realize that. In Philippians Paul says this:

I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Philippians 3:7-8 (NLT)

Do you see those two words in this verse that are translated as "consider" and "compared"? They are the exact same Greek word as was used in the first scripture we read today from Hebrews 11:24 when we were told that Moses "thought". They all mean the same thing- Paul and Moses "evaluated" the worth of two different ways of life and based on the value of each they both "chose" Jesus' way. It didn't make much human sense. I imagine both of them got a good talking to by people who cared about them and were asked if they had gone crazy? But both stuck to their guns. Not because they were afraid of what would happen if they didn't but because they finally saw the value of Jesus' way -vs- the world's way. They chose the line over the dot.

How about you? How about me?

Friday Reflection: So the first two verbs that describe how Moses became Moses- a man who could successfully challenge the most powerful man in the world and ensure the release of the children of Israel and then lead them out of Egypt and forge these folks (over a million people with a slavery mentality) into a brand new nation- were "chose" and "evaluated". Moses chose God's way because he recognized the overwhelming value that God offered compared to the temporary bells and whistles that remaining a prince of Egypt offered. Today we are going to look at the third verb that changed Moses- he focused:

He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. Hebrews 11:27 (NLT)

But what does that mean? How did focusing his eyes on God enable him to become the man he became? To me it's like the difference between how we drive when there isn't a cop behind us and how we drive when there is. What happens when we notice a cop? We slow down. We use our blinkers. We keep a respectable distance between ourselves and the car in front of us. Why? Is it because when we see the police officer we are reminded of how much we love the vehicle code? Do we suddenly become individuals who LOVE the law? Probably not because as soon as that cop exits the highway we usually go back to driving the way we were driving when there wasn't an officer behind us.

We do the same thing with God, don't we? God gives us the ability to live our lives as though He isn't all around us, next to us at all times in all situations. It's the only way we can be allowed free choice- the ability to decide if we're going to adopt God's way or choose our own way. It's

what happened to Adam & Eve and it's why they hid when they heard God coming later that evening in the Garden of Eden. They believed that when God wasn't obviously standing next to them that they were somehow away from His presence. The only time we "sin" is when we convince ourselves that God can't see us. I mean, we wouldn't generally use that terminology and would probably say the concept was ridiculous but it's the only reason sin exists. It's like taking your driving test every time you drive a car- the testing agent never gets out of the passenger seat. You would never break another traffic law not because you love the law so much but because you don't want to lose your license and breaking the smallest law would lead to exactly that. So you drive perfectly.

Moses somehow developed the ability to keep his eyes focused on God the vast majority of the time. He wasn't perfect and his mistakes were painful but he does teach us a valuable lesson- to the extent that you and I can cultivate a moment by moment awareness of God's presence all around us we would never sin again. It's one of the things that changed Moses forever. When he left Egypt Moses ended up in Midian. He spent the next 40 years shepherding his father-in-law's flocks. One day he wandered over to a place with his flocks that he didn't visit very often- he found himself not from from Mt. Sinai and at some point he noticed a bush that was burning but not being consumed. Moses was captivated and decided to check it out. The Bible tells us that the burning bush was the place from which God spoke to Moses. God told Moses that He had heard the cries of the children of Israel, he had seen their plight and now He had come down to do something about it. You know that Moses was tracking with God at this point, right? I mean, Moses had tried to do something about it 40 years ago and it didn't work. Moses was all for somebody getting the Israelites out of Egypt. And then God dropped this little nugget:

Then the LORD told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress... So I have come down to rescue them... Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt." Exodus 3:7-10 (NLT)

And suddenly, Moses isn't tracking with God anymore. Say what? You're sending me? How did that happen? I'm not the one who saw, I'm not the one who heard, I'm not the one who came down... that was all you! How do you get from You hearing, seeing and coming down to telling me to "go"? Moses didn't think he was the guy for the job. He had lots of excuses as to why it shouldn't be him. Moses tells God that he's nobody and what's fascinating is, God doesn't tell him he's wrong. You'd expect God to reply to someone telling Him that they are nobody with, "what? What do you mean you're nobody?!?! Of course you're somebody!!! You're Moses! You've been trained by the Egyptian royal tutors and you can do anything you set your mind to! You're good enough, you're smart enough and doggone it, people like you!"

That's what you'd expect but that's not what God does. When Moses says, "I'm nobody" God doesn't contradict him at all- He just says, "I'll go with you." Then Moses says, "I wouldn't know what to say...", and again God doesn't contradict him. God just says, "I'll tell you what to say." Then Moses says that he's not a good speaker (which was totally true- the Bible says Moses had a stutter) and God just tells Moses that He'll send Moses' brother Aaron to do the talking. God says, "I'll tell you what to say and you tell Aaron and he'll do the public speaking.

God wants to do the same thing with you. Don't think God can use you because you're nobody or you wouldn't know what to do or say? God won't contradict you. He'll just tell you that

wherever He sends you He'll go with you and He'll make sure you have everything you need to do what He asks you to do.

And so Moses asks a final question- he asks God what His Name is. Strange question, right? I don't completely understand why this seems important to Moses but he asks God, "if I go to Egypt and tell the Israelites (who had rejected him 40 years ago when he had tried to help in his way rather than God's way) that the God of Abraham has sent me and they ask me what Your Name is what do I tell them?" And God says:

"I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you... Yahweh, the God of your ancestors... has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. Exodus 3:13-15 (NLT)

What does Moses hear when God says that? "I AM WHO I AM." I'm thinking God was making a statement to Moses (and all of us who would ever read these words second hand)- God is Who He Is and not Who we want Him to be. We've all got ideas of how things should go. We've got plans, time frames, final outcomes. We think we now what's best but if history is any indication, we don't. God's declaration to Moses may have been the catalyst for his future default setting- focusing his eyes on God Who Is invisible. It's what gave him the ability to go through the CRAZY things he would go through over the next 40 years. It's what transformed him from a 40 year old prince of Egypt who thought it was a good idea to kill an Egyptian guard and try to cover it up and then ran when his grandfather the Pharaoh found out about it to a man who would courageously stand before that Pharaoh's son and tell him that he needed to release his free labor workforce upon which rested the economic might of the most powerful nation on earth with a straight face.

Imagine what focusing your eyes on the God Who Is invisible might do for your life?