

The Spirit That Oppresses You

On Sunday, we continued our deep dive into the life of Moses, asking what we can learn from his example and experiences.

1. Warm-up Question: Do you have a recurring nightmare? What is it?
2. Fear is everywhere in life. Moses' greatest fear was Pharaoh. Earlier in his life, Moses had killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating an Israelite slave. Exodus 2:15 tells us, "When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled." To evade the death penalty, Moses escaped into the wilderness to live in hiding. Then at the burning bush, God says, "Come, I will send you [back] to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10.
 - a. As you look back at your past, when have you had to face something incredibly fearsome? What did that feel like?
 - b. How do you think Moses felt when God asked him to return to Egypt and face Pharaoh? Why do you think he obeyed?
 - c. In your life right now, who (or what) is your own personal "Pharaoh," i.e., the thing you most fear?
3. The pattern we see in the life of Moses – being called to face his greatest fear – is often repeated in our own lives. By way of example, Jeff told the story of how Elizabeth Edwards had to face her greatest fear. Growing up, she learned (through her mother's experience) to fear infidelity. Then after years of marriage, and at a time when she had cancer, Elizabeth discovered her own husband's infidelity. It seems like life often forces us to face our greatest fear. Let's think about why.
 - a. I John 4:18 says, "Perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." What does this verse suggest about why God often calls us to confront our greatest fear?
 - b. Suppose Moses had refused to return to Egypt and face his fear of Pharaoh, how would Moses' life have been different? How would Israel's history have been different?
 - c. Jeff said, "Your greatest fear represents your greatest opportunity – if you will face it." What do you think he meant? Do you agree – why or why not?
4. Facing what we most fear isn't easy. Moses' life illustrates why. Read Exodus 5:1-9.
 - a. What emotions might Moses have felt as he entered the presence of Pharaoh for the first time in years? What emotions might Pharaoh have felt?

- b. Pharaoh’s response to Moses’ initial demand was to redouble the workload of the Israelites. As Moses left this first encounter, what do you think he said to God?
 - c. The next several chapters in Exodus describe an excruciating seesaw battle. Ten different times Moses appears before Pharaoh to announce a new plague. After experiencing most every plague, Pharaoh relents and says he will let the Israelites go, only to take back his word after the plague has lifted. How do you think Moses felt after the 5th, 6th, or 7th plague?
 - d. Moses’ experience with Pharaoh suggests that creating change in our lives – and in our world – requires “maniacal persistence.” Think of a time when you overcame a great obstacle in your life. What happened? Did it require great persistence? Were there many failures before you finally achieved success?
 - e. In culture, politics, and history, can you think of examples where creating change required maniacal persistence?
 - f. Generally speaking, where would you plot yourself on the following scale?
 Very easily discouraged Maniacally persistent
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 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 - g. As a practical matter, how can we learn to be more persistent?
5. Although persistence is critical, persistence alone will not deliver victory over the most fearsome obstacles in life. Like Moses, we also need a staff. Read Exodus 8:14-20.
- a. Most of the plagues were initiated by a gesture from Moses and Aaron’s staff. What do you think the staff represents? And what’s the lesson for us?
 - b. Moses’ story illustrates that the battle to face down our greatest fears in life requires a dynamic partnership between us and God. We bring maniacal persistence to the table; God brings supernatural power to the table. Several times in recent sermons, Jeff has said something like, “We are surrounded by supernatural power wherever we go.” What do you think that means? Do you believe it? Why or why not?
 - c. Moses invited God’s supernatural power to flow into situations by gesturing with his staff. What are some ways we can invite God’s supernatural power to flow into a situation?

Deepest thanks to everyone who has made a commitment to be present each Sunday in November and December except when sick or out of town.

***The gift of your consistent presence really matters!
 Let’s keep the momentum going!!
 See ya on Sunday!!!***