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Exodus 2

"Timing is Everything"

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Today's study centers on Moses, the deliverer God sent to rescue the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. We find out in [Exodus 2:1-2](#) that Moses' mother hid him for three months in response to Pharaoh's order that every Hebrew baby boy was to be killed at birth. Pharaoh did this in an attempt to control the growing population of Hebrews in Egypt, because he feared a revolt from the ever-growing number of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt.

The providential hand of God in Moses' life is evident when we read that not only was his life spared, but Pharaoh's own daughter found him in the Nile River and decided to keep him and, surprisingly, she even paid Moses' mother (not knowing she was his mother) to nurse him!¹

Moses lived to be 120 years old and the account of his life can be neatly divided into three sections of 40 years each. In the first 40 years of his life he lived in Pharaoh's palace, enjoying all of the privileges of a child of the leader of the nation. In Acts 7:22 we read that Stephen said that Moses was *"educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."*² The second 40 years was a time of running and refining for Moses. He ran from Pharaoh and fled Egypt after he killed an Egyptian who was fighting with a Hebrew man. Moses went to the desert of Midian, where he would find a wife and have two sons by her. It was in Midian that Moses had an encounter with God and the burning bush. In the last 40 years of his life he would return to Egypt and be used of God to lead the Hebrew slaves out of bondage back to the Promised Land of Israel. The final years of his life would not be easy ones, because of the difficulties he experienced trying to deal with 3 million rebellious, cantankerous, and ungrateful

¹ [Exodus 2:3-10](#)

² The Egyptians were known for their knowledge of medicine, mathematics, and science in particular.

people. These stiff-necked people were allowed by God to wander in the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years until the entire generation died because of their unfaithfulness. Finally, Moses led the next generation to the border of the land of Israel before he died.

Backtracking a bit, it's important to know that even though Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace, he knew something of his Hebrew heritage. However, the Bible doesn't tell us how he knew or when he knew. According to [Acts 7:23-29](#), we read that Stephen said, *"Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not."* They did not recognize him for good reason; it wasn't the right timing. Moses acted 40 years too soon!

Moses was 40 years old when he intervened in a fight between two Hebrews, killing one of them. Moses wasn't moving in God's timing, because it would take another 40 years of refining work and preparation before God could use him – at the age of 80 – to deliver the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. In this case, as in every other aspect of our lives, timing is everything. It's not just what God wants to do; it's when God wants to do it that's important.

Jesus was sensitive not only to what God wanted him to do, but when he wanted him to do it. In [John 7:2-9](#), we read that Jesus moved in sync with God's perfect timing when he said: *"But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, 'You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.' For even his own brothers did not believe in him. Therefore Jesus told them, 'The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.' Having said this, he stayed in Galilee."* Jesus was basically saying, "I'm staying right here until I know it's my time to go."

A similar thing, recorded in [John 11](#), happened in Jesus' ministry when Lazarus, one of his close friends, was sick and near death. The Bible records the fact that Jesus was about 20 miles away when he received word that his friend was ill. It's noteworthy to see that Jesus didn't jump up and rush off to Bethany to heal his sick friend. No, Jesus stayed right where he was two more days, during which time Lazarus died.

The Bible records the details of this situation so we'll know that Jesus wasn't being unloving or uncaring when he didn't go and minister to his friend. [John 11:5-6](#) tells us *"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus*

was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.” By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, both sisters said the same thing: “If you’d been here my brother wouldn’t have died!” While it is true that healing him would have been a great miracle, Mary and Martha missed the greater miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, which was dependent on the timing of God. We are no different than Mary and Martha in that we ask the “What is God’s will?” question, but we don’t often stop to ask the “When is it God’s will?” question.

In Moses’ case, he was only partially right. God did want him to help deliver his own people, but not in this way and not at this time. Moses wasn’t ready, even though he thought he was. Again, the truth of the matter is that God needed 40 more years to refine him and prepare him.

In this study we’re going to learn more about how to best discern if we are in step with the will and the timing of God.

Look Up Instead Of Around

1. We read in [Exodus 2:12](#) that Moses looked *“this way and that way”* before *“he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”*
2. Moses didn’t look up to find out what God wanted
 - a. What Moses needed was God’s leading, which comes through prayer.
3. When we read that Moses looked around indicates that his life was more about the horizontal than it was about the vertical.
 - a. He examined his environment, weighed the odds, checked off the list of pros and cons, and calculated the risks, but he didn’t ask God.

There Should Be No Guilt

4. Moses intuitively knew what he did was wrong because he hid the Egyptian he had killed in the sand.
5. It goes without saying that guilty people attempt to hide things they’ve done.
 - a. The first time this appears in the Bible is the scene of Adam and Eve’s sin when they disobeyed God by eating fruit from the one tree God had told them not to eat from.
 - b. [Genesis 3:8](#) - *“... and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”*

6. When you're doing the will of God, you don't have to be about the business of trying to cover things up, and you certainly don't have to be secretive and sneaky!
7. In [John 18:20](#), we read that Jesus said: “ *‘I have spoken openly to the world,’ Jesus replied. ‘I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.’* ”
8. The simple truth is that when God's in it, so to speak, you will never have to look over your shoulder and worry about the wind blowing the sand off of someone you've buried!
9. When God is in it, there will be a peace about it, and there will be openness and honesty about it.

There Should Be No Striving

10. What in the world was Moses thinking anyway?
 - a. Did he think that he would have to kill one Egyptian at a time and bury them in the sand?
 - b. Did he honestly think this was the way God wanted him to rescue the Israelites?
11. God's will was that all Moses had to do to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and through the Red Sea was to raise his staff!
 - a. God's perfect will was to part the waters so that when Pharaoh's army pursued the Israelites, they would be in the right place for him to roll the waters back so God could be the one to bury them in the sand.
12. We should remember that when God's in it, we don't have to strive and struggle to make things happen.
13. It is important to note, however, that just because God is in something doesn't mean there's no work involved in doing God's will, because there is!

There Should Be No Fear

14. [Exodus 2:14](#) - “*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.’* ”

15. Having a little apprehension because something might be new and unfamiliar is fine, but fear because something is wrong means God's not in it.
16. [2 Timothy 1:7](#) - *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* (KJV)
17. [Colossians 3:15](#) - *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..."*
18. Someone has said that when you make a decision, however big or small, "don't ever go against your peace."

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Exodus 2:1-15](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Looking back at your experiences with making major decisions, has it been the case that you, like Moses, weighed the odds and calculated the risks, but left God out of the matter altogether?
 - a. What role did prayer play in your decision-making?
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about times when they've "gotten it right" and found themselves in the middle of God's perfect timing.
5. How have you tried to "make it happen" in an attempt to get things going so God's will can be done in your life?
6. Read and discuss [2 Timothy 1:7](#) and [Colossians 3:15](#).
7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: look up and not their circumstances or what others think or say when it seems like God's timing is off-kilter; understand the *what* and the *when* of God's timing; recognize that there should never be any guilt, fear or striving when they are following God's will; (have someone prepared to read [2 Timothy 1:7](#) and [Colossians 3:15](#) to "pray the Scripture"); remember that when decisions need to be made, whether big or small, they should never go against their peace.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).