

Moses: The Principle of Personal Transformation

Acts 7, Numbers 12:3, Deuteronomy 29:29

Good morning men. How's everybody doing today? I'm doing great, too, thanks for asking! Hey I got this email this week and this guy and I went back and forth again and again. This is just too good. So we're doing this series on how God makes men, and I'm going to dedicate this morning's message to this guy, you'll see why.

"Pat, Jehovah's Witness versus Christianity. Thoughts and answers??" That's all, no porch, no hey I really appreciate your work and I value your opinion. Just that. So my response, equally short, "This is really not my area. Sorry, Pat." Response, All caps, "YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! DID YOU TURN THE LIGHT ON? I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT YOU A CHRISTIAN LEADER AND BELIEVER CAN SAY THAT THIS IS NOT MY AREA! AND YOU WANT PEOPLE TO BE DISCIPLES AND MEN OF GOD? WHAT DO YOUR DISCIPLES SAY WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE FALSE TEACHINGS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESS? I JUST CANNOT BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE NO RESPONSE TO THIS!" My response, "What I should have said is 'I've not studied this area, so I am not qualified to respond.'" That said, I would like to hold you accountable to your tone and attitude. That's really no way for Christian brothers to talk to each other. Respectfully, Pat." Response, "My humble apology Mr. Pat. I really thought that a person in your position could give me a good answer. My tone and attitude? Oh brother, that sounds like a kid on the playground! Get over it!"

You got to love it! Hey, baby, this one's for you!

Let's start with a shout out. We've got a new group today we want to welcome, the Westwood Men's Group. The leader is William Bruce, they're of the Westwood Presbyterian – PCA, and have just started a weekly study in William's home using the videos. Would you join me in giving the Westwood Men's Group a warm Man in the Mirror welcome. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us.

Again, the study is *How God Makes Men*, and today the title of the message, Moses: The Principle of Personal Transformation. A friend of mine, Rick, a couple of decades ago felt God leading him to go and disciple young men who will in turn disciple others. Another friend of ours here at the Bible Study, a decade ago felt that God was leading him to go and start a used car automobile dealership. He wanted to do that to demonstrate Christian principles and generate funding for the Kingdom of God. It's very interesting because Rick, my friend who felt lead to go and disciple young men went out and tried to do that but he couldn't get any young men to do it with him. Then our friend who started the used car automobile dealership did really well but then he had to close his business because of the great recession. So there are these things that we have a sense that God is leading us to do, and then we go out to do them and everything seems to fall apart. Maybe for example you felt lead by God to invest in some special education to pursue a particular career and now you can't find a position in that field? Or maybe you felt lead by God to start a small business and now it's Friday and you have no idea how you're going to make payroll? Maybe you had a dream that you were going to be a cycle breaker, that you would have the perfect family and wife, but it's turning out to be so much harder than you thought it would. You're beginning to wonder, "God, was that really you or did I just make this up in my

imagination?" So the question that we want to take a look at today is why would God lead you in this direction and then put you in a position where you're either frustrated or even worse, you end up failing. We can't answer what's going on in every situation, but there's a powerful principle in the life of Moses that can help you and me understand why it is that we end up in these positions where we feel like God has lead us to do something that's not turning out like we expected.

Character College

So we're going to begin this morning by looking at Character College. The problem is this, God has an agenda, and when we come to faith in God, we bring our agenda with us, and it takes a while to get on the same agenda. So the Big Idea: **God makes men by taking us through a humbling process that fundamentally changes the way we think.** It gives us a new world view. He enrolls us in Character College, so that we can open our eyes and change the way we think.

The Epic Story of Moses

We're going to look at the epic story of Moses this morning, and we're going to see how God uses our flawed efforts and our wilderness experiences to help change the way that we think. You want to be at Acts 7. We're going to begin at verse 20:

Acts 7:20: At the time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child.

I should add that you're no ordinary child either. I don't think the idea in the Bible is that because he was no ordinary child that that means there are ordinary children. Every child is knit together in its mother's womb and is special to God.

For three months he was cared for in his father's house. He was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

Verse 23: When Moses was forty years old, he decided to go out and check on his Israelite brothers. And he saw an Egyptian and an Israelite fighting together, and he ended up killing the Egyptian. The next day he went out, and he saw two Israelites fighting with each other and he went over to them and he said, "Brothers, why are you doing this? Why are you fighting with each other?" And one of them said, "What are you going to do about it? Are you going to kill me like you killed that Egyptian yesterday?"

So Moses the day before had murdered a man, and he became afraid for his life and he fled into the Midianite wilderness. In verse 30 it says:

Acts 7:30: After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in a burning bush.

Now let's just stop to examine what's going on here in this story. God gave Moses this vision that he would deliver his people from slavery. They had been crying out to God to rescue them, and in another verse we'll look at in a minute, it confirms that God had called Moses to be a deliverer. He had this vision that he would deliver his people, just like you've had a vision that you were going to be a cycle breaker in your family. Just like you've had a vision that you're going to start this business for the glory of God. Just like you've had this vision that you're going to go and disciple young men and they're going

to surround you and listen to the wisdom of your years, and pass it on to others. That's what was going on.

Then Moses went on to do the thing that he was absolutely certain that God had called him to do, and he's driven into the wilderness for forty years. So, one thing for you to think about is that when God gives you a vision, there may be some things that he wants to work into your life and some things that he wants to work out of your life before he actually sends you to do it. In other words, it's not necessarily true that the calling is immediately followed by the sending. In fact, I would suggest to you because of the Big Idea for the day, that **God is taking us through a humbling process that fundamentally changes the way we think**, that there is probably a time gap between when he calls you and when you actually get sent. In fact, I hope it's not forty years, but it would not surprise me if for some of us that the gap between when he calls us to do the great thing that he wants us to do and when he sends us is decades. It certainly was for Moses.

So what was going on? There was just too much Moses in Moses, apparently. Now in Numbers it tells us that later on Moses was the most humble man who ever lived, but at this point when you have enough hutzpah to go out and kill a guy because God has given you this vision to deliver his people, that's not exactly a humble guy waiting on the Lord. That's kind of taking matters into your own hands. So there was too much Moses in Moses. God drove him into the wilderness to help him, to take him through Character College.

Another issue here is that out in this wilderness experience, you've had this sense that God has lead you to do this thing, and now it doesn't seem to be turning out at all like you thought it would, and you feel abandoned. You feel abandoned by God. Men, listen to this, the feeling of abandonment is very similar to the feeling of equipping. God is not abandoning you, he is equipping you. So when you have this feeling like you have been abandoned by God, understand that you are still walking with him. He's not abandoned you, he's not giving up on you, he's equipping you. He was equipping Moses out in the wilderness so that he would have the capability to lead the people in the wilderness when he did eventually deliver them from the hand Pharaoh in Egypt. They had to spend another forty years in the wilderness, and Moses was very equipped by then to do that work. So, it was a post graduate course in character. You've come to Christ, you've been developing Christian character, but guess what? More education's on the way!

I want to say a word about a fallacy that I think is true in my life and I think it's true of other people's lives as well, and it's the fallacy of our motives, thinking that our motives are pure. When we say that we want to go change the world, when you have this idea and you really want to go and make a difference, let me tell you, from personal experience; in the early days of our spiritual maturity, we don't really want to go and change the world for the sake of changing the world. What we really want when we say that we want to change the world and make a difference, it's because we want to be rewarded for it. We want to get something out of it. It's a very advanced stage of spiritual maturity when you can honestly say I want to make a difference, but I want to do it because I'm a servant of God, I want to do it for his glory alone. And then, let me tell you, even then, you never have pure motives. Oh maybe on one day for ten minutes you might have pure motives, but when we try to pursue success, we are always pursuing success for the right and the wrong reasons at the same time. We always have mixed motives; they're always jumbled up together.

I try to show my wife appreciation by telling her, "Patsy, that was a fantastic dinner you prepared," every night that she prepares dinner. There is a sense in that in which I'm trying to up-build her and

sincerely and honestly bless her, but there is another piece to that too. I know that if I complement her, she's going to work hard the next time to make me a very nice dinner. So no matter what you're doing, you always have these mixed motives. Paul said it, "When I would do good, evil is right there with me." He understood that. The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh so that you do not do what you want. They are always there; we always have these mixed motives. So God takes us into the wilderness, he enrolls us in character college to help do two things. One, to help change us and transform us, so instead of doing things to get a reward in a worldly sense, we're really doing things to get a reward in a heavenly sense. Then also, to keep cutting down and pruning back the motives of the flesh. Suffering compels us to seek a God that success will make you think you don't really need. That's the Big Idea, this humbling process is what God takes us through, and it alters and changes the way we think.

Another example; I'm writing a book on this series, *How God Makes Men*, and I'm writing it for all the right reasons. I'm mainly writing it to be obedient to God because this is my vocation and what God has called me to do, and I believe he lead me to write this book. So obedience to God in response to his love for me and because he loved me, in my love for him I am seeking to be obedient to God. That's the number one motive. That's way down the line in spiritual maturity, I admit it, but that's my motive. Secondly is the great commission, that I really and truly want to make disciples. I want to make as many disciples as possible. And so, I say that the publisher wants to sell as many books as possible because their motive is profit, and they want to change lives, too. But, what's good for the goose is good for the gander and I want as many men as possible to have this book too so that we can make as many disciples as possible. And everything I just said is true, but when I would do good, evil is right there with me. I know that I also am hoping that the book will be successful that I might win a little worship. I wonder if Moses felt like that? I wonder if Moses, when he killed the Egyptian, was hoping that the people would adore him for that, and turn to him and recognize that God had sent him to be the deliverer of his people. I'm sure he did. You know why I'm sure he did? Because I know that's what I would have done, and I know that's what most men do in that particular phase of their journey.

So from a worldview perspective, what God is doing is he's taking us through this humbling process to fundamentally change the way we think. Here's what you want to take away from this today, never trust your motives. If you find that you ever think that you have gotten to a point where all that other stuff is behind me now, you are in serious trouble! That doesn't mean that your motives are not mostly pure, in fact they might be pure in every way towards a particular issue that you have, but you just need to understand that as soon as you lock in on the idea that your motives are pure, you have just left a door wide open for the devil to come and war with you. **God makes men through taking us through a humbling process that fundamentally changes the way we think**, and this humbling process takes place in the wilderness, in Character College. So if you're in Character College, or when you're there, one of the messages out of this should be don't resist it. I've taught here for years that whenever you find yourself in the middle of a hard time, never ask God to remove the hard time. Instead, ask him that you would learn every lesson that he has for you during that hard time. Why? Because if you don't, you'll have to go that way again. If you try to short circuit what God is doing in your life, then he's going to have to bring a crisis of a different sort, a new wilderness experience, a new frustration, another failure, because he has something that he wants to build into your life to change the way you think and that is how he does it! Every man in this room knows that your growth has been so much more profound when you've had to be utterly dependent upon God because you had no props in the world.

Graduation Day

That's why God takes us through these humbling processes, because he wants to fundamentally change the way we think, but then we get to graduation day, and how sweet it is. So, Acts 7:30:

After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses trembled with fear and did not dare look up.

That's where Numbers 12:3 comes in that Moses was the most humble man who had ever lived. That's what happened to him in the wilderness, the humbling process.

Acts 7:34: Then God said, "Take off your sandals, you are on holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt."

Now I'm going to send you! And here's another thing to remember, God is not operating on earth time. God's operating in Bible time. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. And so God is operating in Bible time. How long have the Israelites been in slavery? Four hundred years! How long has Moses been in the wilderness? Forty years! And so God says I've heard their prayers. Excuse me? How long does it take a prayer to get from here to heaven! And so God is just doing things around you and in you and through you that are shrouded in mystery. You can't explain this! God shrouds himself in mysteries! Now, the things that have been made plain for us to see are plainly known, Deuteronomy 29:29, but the secret things belong to God. He shrouds himself in mystery. We don't know what this was about. Verse 35:

Acts 7:37: This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, "Who made you ruler and judge?" He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself.

God did send Moses to be the deliverer of his people, it was just on a forty year time delay, and that is very likely the explanation for what's going on in your life too. Not necessarily the only explanation, but God has given us this epic story in the Bible so we can understand this powerful principle of how God works in our lives. This idea that he makes us through this humbling process to fundamentally change the way we think. God is more interested in your character than your circumstances. He is! That doesn't mean that God is not interested in your circumstances. He is extremely interested in your circumstances! But he's never going to sacrifice your character just to give you what you want. He's never going to sacrifice your character just to give you what he wants you to have! He wanted Moses to be the deliverer but he wanted even more for Moses to have the character. He didn't want to give Moses the success of delivering the people and then have him fail as a person, and he doesn't want that for you and me either. So, in the meantime, remember this. He is the principal of character school. You're the student. He's the principal of the principle of personal transformation, of making us, of taking us through this humbling process that alters the way that we think and what we do.

Second thing, in the meantime, remember who you are. You are a son of the most high God, you are a co-heir with Jesus Christ. You are a friend of Jesus. I no longer call you servants, because a servant doesn't know his master's business. Instead, I call you friends because I have told you everything the father told me. I have loved you with an everlasting love. This is how God showed his love among us, he sent his one and only son into the world that through him we might have life. This is love! Not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. So remember who

you are, you are in Christ. You might have a really ragged job history, and you might look like a loser out in the world, but remember who you are. You are a son of the most high God. You may have had your self-confidence shattered because of your work experience or something that's going on in your family; you just can't seem to get your family to work right. You may have irritable children, or a wife who's like a dripping faucet like Proverbs talks about. Remember who you are.

Third, be faithful to do the thing that lies ahead of you. God does his best work when we do our best work. So whatever stage you find yourself in, the one thing you can do is be faithful wherever God has put you in whatever stage you're in, because that is what he has for you right now. So if you find yourself in the middle of a bankruptcy, be faithful. That's the thing God has for you right now, the humbling process. The victory for God comes not at the end of the humbling process, but during it, while you are faithfully the man of God in that position he wants you to be in. So don't ever try to get out the hard time, just be faithful in the hard time to do the thing that he wants you to do. Don't try to get out of it, or you'll just have to relearn the lesson later. The Big Idea today: **God makes men by taking us through a humbling process that fundamentally changes the way we think.** It helps us to understand who we are, what he wants us to do, changes our motives, so that instead of wanting to do something great just to get a reward, to get praise appreciation and recognition and money, instead all those things will come as a reward from God, not as we did in our own flesh in order to get them. Same things, people will appreciate you if you do something to change the world. Maybe the greatest thing you will ever do in your life will be to be a cycle breaker in your family. That will change the world! You will be appreciated for it, you will be recognized for it, but you will be recognized for it because God has done it. The Big Idea: **God makes us by taking us through this humbling process that changes the way we think.** Let's pray.

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father. Lord, we come to you humbly today, because we've been humbled, we've been in this humbling process, all of us. Lord, I pray that you would help each and every one of us to recognize that you take us through this humbling process because you want to transform our lives! You want to change us, to change our character, you want us to graduate, and you want us to get an A. So father, I pray that you would give us the patience of Job, this sense of the humility of Moses, the faith we saw in Abraham and the perseverance we saw in Joseph, that you would give us these things so that we might fully become the men that you created us to be. That you will make us, God, into men that experience the power of God being released in every detail and direction of our lives and that you would be glorified in our lives. Everybody said, amen.