

Leadership and Spiritual Principles from Moses

Western Heritage I: Ancient Israel

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Donald R. Clowers

Colorado Christian University

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There are many examples of spiritual leaders recorded in the Bible (1984) and God has used them to teach the reader many timeless principles. This paper will discuss some of the leadership and spiritual principles exemplified by the life of Moses as recorded in Exodus chapters 1-14.

J. Oswald Sanders (1994) gives a thorough description of the attributes of a spiritual leader as well as principles that help define spiritual leadership. Before a person can be used of God in spiritual leadership, that person must undergo preparation (1994). The bible (1984) records in Exodus chapter 2, how God first delivered Moses from the death sentence that Pharaoh had decreed for all males born of the Hebrew slaves. He would have been killed had he stayed with his birth family, so in order to save him, his mother set him adrift in a basket. She watched as the daughter of Pharaoh picked him up out of the river. Pharaoh's daughter would raise him as her own. Growing up with the Egyptian's royal family, Moses would receive education and training in their ways. More importantly, he would have access to Pharaoh when the time came.

Moses would undergo further preparation after God put him in a place to develop what Sanders (1994) calls spiritual maturity. The Bible (1984) records in the latter part of chapter 2 that after Moses was grown, one day he went to observe his people working and saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrews. Moses then kills the Egyptian and fearing for his own life, he leaves Egypt and goes to Midian. There he meets Reuel, a priest, settles down and marries his daughter, Zipporah. Moses would spend the next forty years under Reuel's guidance, no doubt learning much about God from his father in law. God would then call Moses for the task of freeing the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

By its very nature, spiritual leadership comes with very serious responsibilities, costs, and tests (Sanders, 1994). For Moses, it was the responsibility to bring out the Hebrew slaves from

Egypt and lead them to the promised land.

In Exodus chapters 5-12 (1984), Moses goes to Pharaoh as God directs, and issues pleas for the freedom of the Hebrews and warnings of God's wrath to come if His people are not freed. Moses' leadership would now exact costs in the form of rejection (Sanders, 1994) from Pharaoh, and also criticism (Sanders, 1994) from the Hebrew slaves. Pharaoh would grow angry with Moses for proposing the idea of freedom for a very productive slave population and take his anger out on the slaves by withholding building materials. He would of course require the same amount of production out of them.

This struggle of Pharaoh would be the first of many tests (Sanders, 1994) that Moses would face in his leadership of the Hebrew people. As Sanders (1994) says, "To everyone entrusted with spiritual authority, searching tests are bound to come" (p. 131). In Moses' struggle with Pharaoh, he could have compromised (Sanders, 1994) and accepted Pharaoh's offer of something short of total freedom for the Hebrew slaves. But Moses, stayed true to the instructions and guidance he had been given, and when it appeared to be an impossible situation (Sanders, 1994), Moses turned to God. This is exemplified by Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh after his return from Midian in Exodus chapter 5 (1984).

In addition to leadership principles exemplified by the story of Moses' encounter with Pharaoh, there are a number of spiritual principles as well. First is the promise of deliverance. During Moses' struggle, one of the plagues that God smite Egypt with was that of the death of the first born male, recorded in Exodus chapter 11 (1984). Needless to say, God was now playing hardball with Pharaoh. This decree of death was to effect every family in Egypt, royal or slave. But God remembered his people and delivered them from this plague by allowing them to use the sign of lambs' blood on the door posts. Those with the sign were spared or delivered from the wrath of God. This reinforces God's principle of the shedding of blood for man's

redemption and deliverance from sin unto salvation.

A second principle is God can use people who would not seem to be destined for leadership in a mighty way. In this story, God was able to use Moses, a speaker who lacked eloquent speech, was a murderer, and very reluctant leader to lead not only the release of a nation from slavery, but also one of the largest migrations of people of all time to a new land. God answered all of Moses' objections by basically saying go and I will be with you and direct you. When Moses finally went, great things were accomplished.

This paper has discussed some principles common to spiritual leaders including Moses. Leaders must first undergo preparation for leadership, even though they may not be looking for such a position. Once in the position, a leader has responsibilities to those they lead, and may encounter costs and tests to their leadership over time. This paper has also discussed the spiritual principles of redemption and God's ability to use anyone for his plan.

### References

Sanders, J. Oswald (1994). Spiritual Leadership. Chicago: Moody Press.

The NIV Study Bible. (1984). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.