



Figure 1: Lilies of the field (Matt 6:28)

Living Beyond Work Loss
(Unemployed Support Group)
Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship

*Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.” Matt 6:33*

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Biblical Reflections #2: God's Timing – Not Yours

(Exodus: The Life of Moses – The Call)

1. Introduction:

Last week we talked about the importance of surrendering to God. We discussed seeking his will first and trusting he will provide if we do. We also discussed that there are times in life when God does call us to do something with our time other than work for wages. Therefore it is important for the unemployed to find out if looking for full-time employment is indeed how they should be spending their time. If not, then he or she is trying to operate on his or her own timing instead of God's timing.

This bible reflection is intended to discuss some common reasons why answers to prayers may not be answered right away and then see if we can discern what we should do about that season. The story of Moses and his call shows how God is dealing with many things behind the scene that we may not be aware of. Some are personal things relating to us. *Have you ever heard of the cliché “God cares more about our character than our comfort”?* Some issues God is dealing with relate to other people we may be called to interact with. Other issues have to do with the surrounding cultural, government, and “seasons of time” circumstances being right. Some even have to do with God's grand plans of what he is doing in history. As we go through these passages, ask God to reveal to you what he is doing in your own life.

Since this week's passage is about learning to wait on God's timing and to not try to force our own timing due to fear or impatience, the book of Exodus, which describes the life of

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Moses, provides many examples of why we sometimes need to wait on God to see answers to prayers.

Before we go into this study, let's take the time to define certain terms to clarify what we are discussing here:

Vocation vs. Career

There are differing levels of commitment regarding how you can use the gifts and talents God has given you. The purpose of this list is to define, then compare and contrast those different levels of life's activities. Notice how the first three relate to how you can earn a living so you can be a productive member of society. Ministry is how you serve your church. The last three require a greater level of commitment and sacrifice and refer to something to which you will dedicate your life.

1. **Education** – The knowledge or development that results from an educational process. – This may or may not be related to job preparation. A traditional “liberal arts” college education is designed to help you develop “transferrable skills” and help you learn how to think for yourself.
2. **Vocational Education** – A more modern term relating to training designed to prepare a person for immediate, specific employment.
3. **Career** – A profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent profession. It is more than “just a job” – it is planned and usually takes effort to achieve.
4. **Ministry** – A way of serving God, the church and others. Serving may or may not involve using our technical (job-related) skills and our transferrable skills.
5. **Life Purpose** – Living for a purpose greater than oneself. This purpose can be self-selected (*i.e. Providing a good foundation for your own children to grow.*)
6. **Vocation** – One's life work. The word originally meant, “to be called by God” for this life work.
7. **Calling** – To be called by God to a particular job/plan/task. His purpose for one's life. A God-given calling will relate to what he is doing in the world and during our time in history. A God-given calling will be where your skills, interests, and abilities meet up with an unmet need in the world. Moses is a perfect example of someone who had a life's calling. God had planned to use him to lead the Israelite people out of Egyptian slavery, and to prepare them to enter the Promised Land.

2. Primary Passage:

(*Note: All passages were taken from NASB¹ translation unless otherwise noted.*)

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The book of Exodus gives us many reasons why God may delay in answering our prayers – especially those for employment or fulfilling our calling. Many of those reasons have to do with timing.

A: Seasons Of Life – Why God Delays in Answering Prayers:

By taking a look at some of the key passages in the book of Exodus, we can see God's timing at work in preparing Moses to do what God had called him to do.

Prepared for Service:

God's Purpose for Moses: The following passages reveal God's call for Moses' life and how it related to his grand plans for human history.

One day, while he was tending to the sheep, God gained his attention through a burning bush that was not consumed (Exod 3:2).

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exod 3:6-10)

The Preparation: As we read about the first 80 years of Moses' life, we can discern how God prepared him for His Call. As noted above, how we earn a living and our calling may be related, but they are not always the same thing. If and when they do come together, it will likely take several years to come to pass. In the meantime, we should be spending that time developing the character and skills needed to carry out his purposes. Having grown up in Pharaoh's household, means Moses would have likely been schooled to be in some administrative/leadership role.

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God's calling for your life will be relevant to who you are:

Generation: Moses was born during the season of the male infanticide and persecution of the Israelites. If Moses were born during non-challenging times, his mother would have never given him up.

and he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." (Exod. 1:16)

The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. (Exod 2:2-3)

Family Circumstances: Moses was born of the House of Levi (Exod 2:1-2).

Preparation may include the family life in which you were raised. Our life experience is one of many things that contribute to our identity. He often will call an individual from among their own community to do his work. Someone who has intimate knowledge of a given group of people's shared experiences, culture, language and circumstances, etc. will be best qualified to understand the subtle nuances that affect them. God wanted to bring his people out of slavery. Because Moses was a member of the Levi tribe, he would not only be able to relate to the Israelites, he would also be seen as being qualified to be a spiritual leader among the people. Notice that Moses was given back to his birth mother for nursing until he had been weaned. While Moses likely did not remember living with his birth mother, the fact that he was not taken away from her at birth would have provided him with a bond to his people.

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. (Exod 2:1-2)

Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. (Exod 2:9)

Raised in Pharaoh's House (Development of Needed Skills) (Exod 2:3-10)

By being raised in the house of the Pharaoh, he would have had the finest education available at the time. He would also have been raised to expect to take on some sort of leadership role. God's plan for his life required the skills, education and mindset of someone who was prepared for leadership. However, someone born into the life of a slave would not have such an opportunity. Instead he would have been brought up to think and act like a slave.

Sometimes character issues will impact God's timing:

Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a

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Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (Exod 2:11-12)

Immaturity

Moses knew he was an Israelite. So when he saw the Egyptian mistreat one of his own, he felt compelled to do something about it in his own power. This is a sign of immaturity to act on impulse. This act of immaturity shows that Moses was clearly not ready to receive all the responsibility God had planned for him to take on. Christian maturity involves seeking God's will, power and guidance before trying to "take on the world."

Sin

In addition to being an act of immaturity, killing the Egyptian was obviously an act of sin.

He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known." When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Sometimes our life is the consequences of our choices. As is commonly known, Moses fled the house of Pharaoh for fear of reprisal. Until God has addressed any sin that interferes with our obedience and surrender to him, he will not give us what he has in store for us. Among the more obvious reasons why, is because our sins literally can derail us from what he has in store for us. As the above situation shows, until we have surrendered to God, we will not do what he wants done the way he wants it done. But the good news is that even when we do sin, he still can turn it around for good.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. (Gal 6:7)

But the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:48)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

Character Transformation: Moses lived in the desert for 40 Years (Exod 2:11-25): As season of "isolation" – for the purpose of transformation.

While it is commonly known that Moses spent his midlife years living a very humble, isolated life in the desert, people tend forget that during this time of living a very "ordinary" life, Moses' character was transformed from a hot-headed kid to a humble

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leader who was prepared to submit to God's plans and ways of solving problems. In addition, Moses also had to develop new life skills. It is likely that if he grew up in the Pharaoh's household he probably had everything done for him by servants. However, by living the modest life of a shepherd meant he would have to do things for himself. He also developed some "transferrable skills" which would later prove to be invaluable to his calling: He learned how to live the desert life so he could then teach others how to do so as well. Could you imagine trying to lead and manage over a million people in the wilderness when you yourself don't know how to survive the wilderness?

So often I hear Christians proclaim the reason God has them at a particular job or situation is because they think God wants to use them there to "witness to others". However, one thing most people don't realize is that more often than not God is doing more IN you than he is THROUGH you. This is the primary principle I learned through my studies at Fuller Seminary.

God's Master Plan

I was asked recently from someone who doesn't know the bible when and why God would intervene in some situations where people sinning against others and not in other situations. I said, "Well, I'm not God, but based on what I have seen in the scripture, in my own life, and in the lives of others, it seems to me that he will intervene when it serves his grand plans." Also note that timing was important. The king who wanted to kill Moses needed to be out of the way first.

Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them. (Exod 2:23-25)

Our Attention to His Call

He will often use people to carry out his grand plans. However, when he does call on us, we need to be ready to respond to him. We need to not be so distracted by the things of the world that we don't notice what he is doing right in front of us:

So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." (Exod 3:3)

Our Response to His Call

Often times we may be overwhelmed, insecure, or doubt what we are hearing, and thus find ourselves wrestling with God and his call upon our lives. Notice the dialog between Moses and God in 3:4-4:17. Have you ever done anything like this? This wrestling period can take some time for some people.

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod 3:11)

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Leaders may not be ready

The people you may need to interact with may not be ready for what God wants to do.

But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians.” (Exod: 3:19-22)

Disobedience

Sometimes there are things in our life that God has told us to do, but we are not responding. Sometimes he tolerates our disobedience and sometimes he doesn't. Only he understands why. However, when he decides to not tolerate our disobedience, there will be consequences. In this passage, it is apparent that God had instructed Moses to circumcise his son but had not yet done it:

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.” So He let him alone. At that time she said, “You are a bridegroom of blood”—because of the circumcision. (4:24-26)

Partners need to be ready

We will often need to partner with others for ministry and sometimes need to wait on their preparation as well.

Now the LORD said to Aaron, “Go to meet Moses in the wilderness.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him to do. (Exod: 4:27-28)

So What's the Point?

God wants us to see that Moses used his skills, education and, “life experiences” to further the kingdom of God and that timing is an important part of the execution of his plans.

Part A Reflection:

To help you fully process this lesson, you are encouraged to take the time to answer the following questions. Follow-up reflection is a necessary part of the learning process. Feel free to write on additional sheets of paper if necessary.

How does this topic relate to your life?

How does this lesson relate to previous lesson(s) in how they apply to your life?

How is God using this desert season to work on any character issues in your life?

After reading these scriptures, do you sense that God is speaking to you about what kind of timing issue(s) is/are delaying your answer to prayers?

How is God speaking to you right now during this lesson?

What can you do to make sure you are cooperating with God's timing?

B: With My Current Season, What Type of Work is Appropriate?

During our last session, we also talked about the difference between job/career and life's calling. An available handout, "Reaching Career Goals" can help us learn to realize that when we do seek a job there are some jobs that can lead toward our goals/dreams and jobs that can actually distract us from our dreams.

After going through this handout, take the time to answer the following questions. This combined approach should give you a sense of whether or not you should indeed be looking for paid employment at this time in your life.

What transferrable skills were you able to develop as a result of your prior jobs and employment?

**Are you developing any new transferrable skills during this desert season of your life?
If yes, explain your response.**

How do you think he wants to use those old skills and new skills for his grand plans?

If it is appropriate for you to indeed be looking for a job right now? Where are you in the process? **Should you be looking for a “Survival Job, Entry-Level, Transition or Dream Job?”**

Do you think you may need to seek some kind of training to develop any needed skills?

What is the next step you should be taking right now?
