

# **MOSES & LEADERSHIP – Finishing Well**

## **Deuteronomy 31-34**

**Teaching for Peace Church**

**April 5, 2009**

**PURPOSE** – To give a vision for godly leadership that finishes well in life.

**MAIN IDEA** – It is not a given that Christian leaders finish strongly, but Moses show us how – by being committed to mentoring, spiritual renewal, blessing others, and keeping the kingdom vision in view.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Let's open our Bibles to Deuteronomy 31 (p. \_\_\_\_\_)

1. We come this evening to the conclusion of what has been a 12-part series on MOSES & LEADERSHIP.

(i) Back in January, we began this series by noting how Moses was uniquely SHAPED for his leadership calling – born & nurtured a Hebrew, trained an Egyptian Prince

– “You are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works – which God has prepared in advance for you to do.”

Who you are FITS with the leadership callings you are given.

(ii) However, in order to carry out that calling, Moses first had to learn DEPENDENCE on God – 40 years in the wilderness.

(iii) There he receives a VISION & CALL – Leadership is influencing others toward God’s preferred future.

(iv) But “Who Am I?” to do this work? FACING OBJECTIONS – God grants Moses (us) promises of His presence & help

(v) With that, Moses begins his work – He goes to Pharaoh, get stymied by both Pharaoh and his people, learns the need for PERSEVERANCE in the task.

(vi) OTHER Leadership LESSONS come along – How to confront / the place of stillness / handling complaints / praying for your group’s mission & people. / delegation / upholding vision & values when they are challenged / personal renewal – sharpening the saw.

Leadership has many dimensions to it – requiring integrity, skill, and courage.

2. Tonight's concluding lesson is about FINISHING WELL as a leader for God in this world  
= His LIGHT / SALT ... His influencing agents.

(i) The apostle Paul likened the Christian life to running a race – *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize!* (1 Cor. 9:24-25)

= Run to win! Run in such a way that you're STRONG through to the end!

A. The Christian life can be likened to a marathon. Having run a couple, I know that there are VERY DIFFERENT ways that people finish.

I.e. – Every year 40,000 people register for the Chicago marathon – about 8,000 of those don't finish. Others finish walking & limping – but they do get there. Others finish jogging, some even sprinting in triumph!

HOW WILL YOU FINISH as a Christian? As a leader in God's cause?

3. Dr. Robert Clinton, a professor of leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary, has done a lot of research on this subject of FINISHING WELL.

What he discovered through his research in Scripture is that MANY BIBLICAL LEADERS do not finish well. In fact, he estimates that only about 30% could be classified as finishing their lives well!

Using the marathon analogy, he groups people into 4 categories:

(i) There are those WHO FINISHED WELL – RUNNING – They walked with God at the end of their lives. They were contributing to God's causes at a high level. They were fulfilling what God had them to do:

Samuel – anointing David

Daniel – contributing to government in a foreign land

Job – restored in praise & blessing

Caleb – ready to take his portion of the Promised Land

Peter / Paul – strong to the end, then likely martyred

This is how we would aspire to FINISH our life of influence for God in this age. These characters are our vision ... not just pushing a shuffleboard stick in pleasant climes!

(ii) Others could be described as only WALKING at the end of their life:

David – having mismanaged his family, must quell his son, Absalom's, rebellion

Hezekiah – has 15 years added to his life, but spends them foolishly – showing off his palace treasures to a Babylonian envoy whose king who will later invade Judah

Jehoshaphat – another godly king, concludes life by making some ungodly alliances with foreign nations.

(iii) Then there are those who finished LIMPING!

Eli the priest – whose unregenerate sons did him in

Saul – lost it in jealousy and bitterness

Solomon – too many wives! Too much wealth!

Gideon – who made a golden ephod that others idolized

(iv) Then there are those Biblical leaders whose folly never really got them to the finish line:

Absalom – hanging by his hair on a tree

Judas / Ahab / Abimelech / Nabal – whose name means fool!

4. NOT EVERYONE FINISHES WELL! (Even believers!)

- Sometimes it's mishandled finances that cause them to lose influence (can think of examples, even in our region)

- Sometimes it's sexual misconduct (Ted Haggard – had earned all kinds of leadership influence – president of the National Association of Evangelicals – now selling insurance in some obscure location)

- Sometimes it's pride (Hezekiah) – look how much I've done / made

- Sometimes complacency sets in – we just settle for a comfortable life

- Sometimes it's family relationships – Dr. Robert Schuller & son (World Magazine)

- Sometimes it's on account of untended wounds – hurts from the past that bring anger & vulnerability – spiritual maturity as a Christian hasn't been adequately pursued and a leader loses the respect of others because they're too manipulative or controlling or have too many other issues.

HOW DO YOU WISH TO BE MOVING AT THE FINISH LINE OF YOUR LIFE FOR GOD?

AND HOW DO WE AVOID FINISHING OUR LIFE & LEADERSHIP IN CHRIST POORLY?

## II. MOSES

This evening I want to look at 4 passages from the conclusion of Moses' life. These passages not only indicated that Moses finished well his life of godly leadership, they also show us ways that we can do the same.

From each of these passages I want to draw one characteristic of a person who finishes well:

### 1. READ DEUTERONOMY 31:1-8

Moses passes on the godly vision to his mentee, Joshua!

He himself does not lead God's people into the Promised Land. He brings them to the edge of it. Then Joshua takes over.

(i) One of the ways we finish well is by intentionally passing our spiritual heritage on to others. We do that by seeking to mentor others.

We want them to see the spiritual vision that you've been granted in God – that they might carry that vision forth into new & fresh ways – like Moses passing the baton to Joshua.

A. As parents we do that with our children / grandchildren;

As church fathers & mothers, we do that to those younger in the faith.

*Titus 2:4 – Older women, train younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God.*

(ii) Mentoring takes many forms & shapes (and sometimes we get hung-up by the word):

A. I feel as though I mentor the Harvey House guys when I teach them in Bible Study. I'm training them to read God's Word – in Christ. It is a part of my spiritual heritage and vision to understand Scripture in its full meaning – and so I want to mentor others in knowing how to read the Word.

B. We mentor others in relationship – getting involved in their lives. Helping them out. Being an example. Assisting with their needs

C. Someone once broke mentoring down into these different TYPES:

Habits mentoring – a disciple – who trains others in spiritual disciplines

Skills mentoring – a coach who mentors in ministry skills

Advice mentoring – a counselor is sought for wisdom

Knowledge mentoring – a teacher train in Scripture

Values mentoring – a model

Character mentoring – an accountability presence

Mentoring is leaving behind a legacy.

Moses had worked with Joshua for many years. At the end of his life, he hands the mantle of leadership over to him: *“Be strong & courageous ... for the Lord goes with you”*.

That’s FINISHING WELL – look to mentor others.

2. READ DEUTERONOMY 32:1-4

He then goes on in the song to recount the works of the Lord among Israel – who saved them, but then brought judgment in times of sin, and will ultimately vindicate his people.

(i) Verse 3-4 – This is finishing well – with a song in your mouth – *I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God. He is the Rock, His ways are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*

(ii) This kind of praise comes from a life of spiritual discipline – taking time to reflect on the works of God and to rejoice in God.

- Last Sunday we saw how Moses set up his Tent of Meeting – to go and be with God – speaking as friend to friend – basking in relationship

(iii) As you get older, that kind of intimacy doesn’t just happen.

As I’ve heard said many times, “Getting Older is Not for Sissies!” (I find that more true the older I get!)

- You can get stale with God EASILY
- Routines, empty relationships ... When have you last spontaneously broken out in praise to Him: “Lord, I love you. I praise You. You are so awesome!”?

(iv) We get busy – with family / work / church / lots of things

Caesar Molebatsi writes this about the challenge of fast-paced living: *You begin to drown in your own success. You do so many things and because God has gifted you, people demand that you do more. As you attempt to respond to those demands, you end up drowning in them. The antidote to this is to learn afresh God's presence – so you stay connected.*"

A. As leaders, we must make our way to that Tent of Meeting.

The older you get, it can become HARDER to do so.

When the Spirit of Praise is NOT in you, temptation looms!

B. As leaders, we want also to be LIFELONG-LEARNERS – reflecting on what God has done and is doing!

MOSES FINISHED WELL as a person of vital God-thought / God-praise. He had a song to sing at the end of his life!

He went to his Tent of Meeting to be with God.

### 3. READ DEUTERONOMY 33:1-6

In this chapter, Moses goes on to BLESS the 12 Tribes of Israel.

(i) In some ways, this connects into the first principle of mentoring, but it is BROADER.

Moses lived to the end with a HEART for others!

a. As we get older our lives can get smaller, more confined to only family.

Moses lived to the end with a heart for others!

(ii) Why? He was struck by God's love for his people:

Verse 3 – *Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand.*

(iii) And in that love, he blesses Reuben, Judah, Levi, Benjamin.

*LET REUBEN LIVE & NOT DIE ... NOR HIS MEN BE FEW*

*Hear, O Lord, the cry of Judah;*

*About Levi – Bless all his skills, O Lord*

*Benjamin – "Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him." ... and so forth!*

= beautiful blessings

Dave Beurling, president of the Lionshare Leadership Group writes, *“Leaders who are competent in ministry tend to plateau in their growth. It is possible to minister at a level of competency without the presence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, leaders have developed ministry skills that can be performed well but without the active presence of God.*

A. One way to avoid PLATEAUING in life is to be committed to BLESS OTHERS!

- to continue to be open to know others, build relationship with others, let our hearts be stretched to speak God’s love into others:

- So that, at the finish line of life, we can say to about & to others:

MAY YOU LIVE

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOUR SKILLS

REST SECURE IN THE LORD ..... (i.e. – mom)

4. One more passage - READ DEUTERONOMY 34:1-8

I think this to be one of the most heart-wrenching scenes in Scripture. Moses – who had gone through all those trials leading God’s people out of Egypt and through the wilderness – gets right to the edge of the Promised Land – but is not permitted to enter it himself.

- Yet God gives him a GLIMPSE of it – from the heights of Mount Pisgah he looks over the land.
- And it states in v. 7 – “his eyes were not weak”

(i) This is another IMAGE of those who FINISH WELL.

- They’re looking ahead; looking to the kingdom to come

A. If we only look for godly success in this age, we will get disappointed & discouraged. The best is yet to come. That HOPE helps us finish well, strongly through this age

(ii) Hebrews 11 is a list of people who finished well – heroes of faith

Verse 13 – *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. So they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth ...*

Verse 16 – *They were longing for a better country – a heavenly one.*

MOSES IMAGES THIS

(iii) And that KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE helps us to finish well – because we PRESS to the finish line of life in this age knowing (in C.S. Lewis’ terms) it’s only the end of the first chapter of a very long book!

A. I heard it once said of a preacher that he was so heavenly-minded, he was no earthly good. But the point here is that being heavenly-minded makes us & keeps us of earthly good ... right to the end!

MOSES SIGHT WAS STRONG in that way THROUGH TO THE END!

### III. CONCLUSION

FINISHING WELL.

Our eyes are fixed this week ahead on the human being who did that better than anyone else in this age: JESUS CHRIST

To the end:

He mentored others – Woman (Mary), your son; ... and she, your mother

He blessed others – “Father, forgive them – for they know not what they do”

He maintained spiritual vitality – Father, into your hands I commit my spirit

He kept the Kingdom Perspective before Him – “Today, you will be with me in Paradise”

So that, at the very end, Jesus could say: IT IS FINISHED

He had run the race marked out for Him. He had lived with integrity & obedience. He knew His life was one in God’s will. IT IS FINISHED.

May we grow in that same integrity, year by year, as we live on as Christians and leaders in this age.

AMEN