

## **Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses**

### **Lesson #9, Leadership Doesn't Excuse You from Family Responsibilities**

#### **Text: Ex.4:24-26**

We have used this text before (Lesson #4), but then it was to emphasize the importance of having family to *support/save* us, as Zipporah did for Moses. Now, let's take a look from a different perspective. We noted from the outset of this study that both *positive* (*do or be like* this) and *negative* (*don't do or be like* this) examples would be utilized. *Failures* often teach us as much if not more than successes, if we are willing to look carefully and learn (e.g. Eve in the Garden; King Saul and the Amalekites; David's sin with Bathsheba; Peter's denial of Jesus). Moses' failure here is no different. **So, what should we learn from this *negative* example?**

#### **1. Even *spiritual leaders* sometimes make mistakes and fail, vv.24b-25.**

People of great faith and leadership also make mistakes. We've seen Moses' apparent *reluctance/hesitancy* to take on the task God appointed for him, cf. vv.10,13; and later on, there will be the *sin at Meribah* (cf. Num.20:2-13) that prevented him from actually entering Canaan with Israel. But here in this text, Moses' failure is different from either of these others. He isn't just *reluctant* to take on a huge task despite God's command and assurances; and he isn't sinning out of anger and frustration from the difficulties of leadership either. Moses' failure in this case was *as a father in his duty to his family* (cf. Gen.17:9-14 and Josh.5:2-9). It wasn't about the *leadership of Israel*, but *family leadership*- though God's *anger* surely suggests a connection (cp. 1Tim.3:4-5). There are two important additional considerations on this point:

- Sometimes, poor *results* can be traced back to poor *leadership* in the home; Eli serves as an example, 1Sam.3:13; cf. Deut.21:18-21; but,
- There are also times when the *sins of the children* do not stem from a *failure of leadership in the home* or *from the father*, cf. Gen.3, Adam and Eve; Hos.7:8-15, Ephraim; Luke 15:11-32, the Prodigal and the Elder Brother.

Why include this information? Because we often think that any and all spiritual leaders must be perfect examples of leadership in the home. Obviously, Moses was not. Although God was apparently willing to *kill him* and "start over" with someone else to lead Israel, also note that once Zipporah had "taken care of" Moses' failure, God was still willing to use him. Additionally, we also tend to assume that sins of the children are necessarily the responsibility of the father (and abuse Prov.22:6 to make the point). Indeed, such may be the case; but it is also true that even "perfect parenting" does not eliminate the free moral agency of adult children, or the influence(s) of the world on them. Certainly, some failures may prohibit one from certain "official" leadership positions (cf. 1Tim.3:2), but the biblical story is full of flawed characters becoming great leaders through faith and with God's assistance. Yes, you've made mistakes- perhaps even some for which God wanted to kill you, but if you're still here you can learn from them and help/lead others to avoid them!

#### **2. But *spiritual leadership* doesn't excuse us from *family responsibilities*, vv.25b-26.**

I have no idea why Moses hadn't done what God commanded and expected of him relative to circumcising his sons. Perhaps it was just the unpleasantness of the task; or, the fact that they were in Midian; but it could have also been that Moses thought he was somehow excused from the "mundane" *family responsibilities* because of the "greatness" of the *spiritual* task of leadership to which he was appointed, cf. Acts 7:25. Remember that even great spiritual leadership roles and responsibilities include simple acts of service, cf. John 13:1-17! It is easy to become so engrossed with "the big picture" that we overlook the small characters and components in it. Whatever your spiritual leadership role/responsibility may be, "family obligations" cannot be neglected, cf. Eph.5:25,22; 6:4; Titus 2:1-8.

What are the "take-aways" from this lesson? Primarily these three: 1) Don't expect your *spiritual leaders* to be perfect; 2) Don't exclude yourself from potential opportunities to *lead* others because you've "made some mistakes" (we all have, including Moses!); and, 3) Don't allow the significance of *spiritual leadership* "outside the home" or "in the kingdom" to cause you to neglect or fail in your responsibilities "in the home"- both are important!

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**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why are “negative” examples just as important to our learning as “positive” ones?
  
2. What three *mistakes/failures* of Moses are mentioned in this lesson? How would you categorize or characterize these failures (how is each different from the others)?
  
3. Provide at least a couple of biblical examples where “sins of the (adult) children” seem to result from *family leadership failures* of the parents.
  
4. Provide at least a couple of bible examples where “sins of the (adult) children” are not the result of *family leadership failures*.
  
5. How many *unflawed* spiritual leaders are there in the Bible? What does this tell us about all the rest of the spiritual leaders depicted in the Bible?
  
6. Why are the answers to #5 important to you and me today?
  
7. Why hadn't Moses circumcised his sons?
  
8. Given the answer to the previous question, what's the point of considering this “negative example” from the life of Moses relative to spiritual leadership?
  
9. Which was more important: Moses *leading* Israel from captivity to Canaan, or Moses fulfilling his *family leadership* responsibilities? Please explain your answer.
  
10. What are three important “take-aways” from this text and lesson?