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FINDING WHO YOU ARE

Ever so often we read or hear about a person that was adopted at an early age who, upon growing up and finding out about being adopted, tries to locate and contact his natural parents. To many people getting in touch with their background and finding who they are in terms of their parents is very important. Most of us know our parents and yet we have a need to identify ourselves relative to who we are as persons, who we are in relationships to others, who we are in terms of vocation. The most important of the "who are you?" questions relates to who we are spiritually. This question is one of the cornerstones of Christianity in that the concept of our being a child of God and joint heirs with Christ is revolutionary and life changing.

Centuries ago there was a man who struggled with this "Who am I?" question and the answers that he found had profound influence on the history of the world. Moses was born to poor Jewish parents but grew up in the household of the Pharaoh as the adopted son of the daughter of the Pharaoh. We learn from the New Testament book of Hebrews that after Moses grew up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:24-25). We also see from the account given by Stephen in Acts 7 that Moses was forty years old when he arrived at this conclusion. How he discovered that he was adopted is not revealed to us. It is possible that he did not look like the Egyptians and was conscious that he was different. Perhaps his adoptive mother told him--we don't know. We do know that he identified with the Hebrew people and visited among them and may have even lived among them.

¹¹Now 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 Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹²So 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. ¹³He 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?" ¹⁴But 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." Exodus 2:11-14 (NASB95)

I find it interesting that many people can see others being mistreated and are indifferent about it while others become greatly upset over the slightest injustice. Moses was in the latter category. He became so concerned about the abuse that the Egyptian was inflicting on the Hebrew slave that he took up the battle for the defenseless slave and killed the Egyptian. It appears that he let his emotions get in the way of taking a logical approach. He did not try to reason with the Egyptian nor did he command him to stop the beatings (which he probably could have done). This act was an impulsive, spur-of-the-moment thing that Moses knew was wrong even before he did it. He looked around before he hit the Egyptian and then he hid the body in the sand to conceal the evidence. There is no indication that he felt remorse for having killed the Egyptian--he probably thought that he deserved to die; therefore, it was all right--as long as he didn't get caught, of course. Many people operate their lives by their own standard and they rationalize their behavior as justifiable and feel no remorse for their wrong actions as long as they don't get caught.

Moses was assuming a leadership role among the Hebrew people of being their arbitrator and protector. This was to be his calling; however, the timing and the methodology was not right. This is a lesson that all of us need to learn. How and when a thing is done is many times just a

important as what is done. He found out just how much his self-appointed role of protector was appreciated when he intervened in a quarrel between two Hebrews. The question put to him was one that needed to be asked: By whose authority are you acting? If we go out on our own authority, then we wind up making up the rules as we go along and those that are influenced by that kind of behavior are frightened by it. The Hebrew was concerned that in Moses' system of justice that he might impose the death penalty for every infraction. This was what he had done in the case of the Egyptian.

When Moses realized that the death of the Egyptian was widely known by other people, he became afraid and rightly so.

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come *back* so soon today?" ¹⁹ So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat." Exodus 2:15-20 (NASB95)

The word went out from Pharaoh: Moses - Wanted Dead or Alive. Moses knew he was guilty. He knew what the penalty was for his folly. Should he turn himself in or run? Run! Moses felt no loyalty to the nation of Egypt and there was no reason to do anything but leave. The land of Midian was named after one of Abraham's sons and was located in southeastern Sinai and west central Arabia. This was the area where Moses would spend some 80 years of his life, a dry desert land. When he came into the area he went to an oasis and while he was there he encountered something that triggered his keen sensitivity about injustice. Just picture what happened: the young shepherd girls came to the oasis and worked hard to fill up the watering troughs to water their flocks and then several men came up and took advantage of their hard work by watering their own sheep. Moses was watching all of this and he was the type that was not going to sit idly by and let something like that happen. He was likely armed and was probably well trained to fight, so he had no hesitancy in challenging the men to back off. Then he helped the girls water their sheep.

Apparently, such things happened often and when the girls returned early, their father was curious to know why. When he was told what had happened he immediately sent the girls back to invite this man to stay for dinner. Reuel was the priest of Midian and it is likely that he was a worshiper of the One True God, the God of Abraham. His name literally means "friend of God". He is called Jethro later on and it is thought that this is a title meaning "his excellency". This is like Baptists referring to their pastor as "reverend" rather than calling him by his name.

Reuel was interested in being hospitable as was the custom in the Middle East; however, one wonders if he might not have thought that this stranger might be a future son-in-law. Such things were probably much on his mind since he had seven daughters. Moses came to dinner and then stayed on.

²¹ Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. ²² Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." Exodus 2:21-22 (NASB95)

Was Moses a capable person? Very much so! He had the finest upbringing, education and training the world could offer. Was he a caring person? Apparently, so. He was concerned

about the helpless and the abused. So why is he off in the back side of nowhere living with a family of nomads? I think that the answer lies in the fact that all these things (good attribute and capabilities) are not sufficient for a person to be used of God. Moses was capable and he knew it. He thought that he was so capable that he could do anything without anyone's help. That kind of attitude is a hindrance to our being used by God. Moses probably thought that God needed him to protect the rights of the helpless. It would take 40 years in the desert of Midian for Moses to come to the point of not trusting in his own strength and of reaching the conclusion that he was not indispensable to God. At the same time God was giving Moses valuable experience in the land where he would eventually lead the Children of Israel. Moses probably thought that he was a failure; however, God had a plan for his life. I believe that God has plan and a purpose for the life of each one of us if we will just let Him work it through us. In doing so we can find who we are in relationship to God, which is the most significant question that we can ever answer.