

Ministry Matters™ | Blog | Sermon Series: The Story of Moses

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Week 1: Auspicious Beginnings

Exodus 1:1-2, 10

The story of Moses' birth takes place amid tragedy. A king arose in Egypt, a pharaoh, who was threatened by the Hebrew people. Even after the Hebrews were forced into hard labor, Pharaoh was still troubled. We do not know why. Perhaps it was sheer numbers. Perhaps it was the Hebrews' faith in God. Perhaps it was their tenacity of spirit. Perhaps it was their obvious and unwavering confidence in a Lord of history!

Pharaoh may have been an emotionally insecure man. The storyteller wants us to understand that the number of Hebrews was sufficient to threaten those in power.

The result: Pharaoh issued a terrible decree. He ordered that all male infants born of the Hebrew women were to be thrown into the Nile River and drowned. His executive order was given to the Hebrew midwives. The midwives, however, refused. They simply could not or would not comply with such a command. So Pharaoh called them before him in the palace. "Why have you done this," he cried, "and allowed the boys to live?" (1:18).

The midwives used clever tactics in their response. They replied, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them" (1:19).

And the storyteller says, "So God dealt well with the midwives" (Exodus 1:20). God looked favorably upon these family servants. The message is clear. Sometimes it is important for the people of God to be shrewd. The Hebrew midwives exhibited a bright, quick-witted handling of the situation.

Moses' mother kept him securely guarded and quiet when he was a very young infant. But once he was three months old, something had to be done. She decided to hide the child.

She built a small basket of reeds from the river. She cemented the reeds together with some kind of tar or pitch. She placed her son in the basket and set it quietly afloat among the tall grasses along the edge of the Nile. She assigned the family baby-sitter to watch over him. Capture this picture in your mind's eye: a tiny child floating in the Nile and an older sister perhaps fifteen or twenty yards away keeping watch. The setting has an inherent beauty all its own. If the infant Moses could have spoken at this point in our story, he probably would have spoken of the miracle of an older sister who loved him and who stood watch over his basket in the river.

One day the daughter of the pharaoh (the princess of the land) came to bathe in the Nile. She heard the sound of the baby crying. Moses' sister was assuredly alarmed at this development. She probably thought, "Oh, no. We're done. We are discovered!"

But the baby Moses captured the heart of the princess. In one special moment a daughter of Pharaoh broke the pattern of cruelty that had been ordered in Egypt. The princess knew the edict of her father. But she also knew the innocence of this small child. Her heart claimed him. She would take him home.

Next comes what may be the most fascinating part of the initial story. Moses' sister went to the princess and asked, "Would you like me to find someone to nurse and care for the child?" The princess was delighted. Miriam left at once to get her mother. She brought her back to the princess.

Note what happened next! The princess said, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages” (Exodus 2:9). Here is a statement to warm the heart of every mother! (This might even be a good preacher’s text for Mother’s Day!) A mother paid by the state for watching and raising her own child!

Moses’ mother raised him in the palace of the Egyptian king. Evidence indicates that she was the one who saw God at work in all of this. The whole scenario could have been coincidence, of course. It could have been blind luck. But Moses’ mother knew better.

This Hebrew mother faithfully told her son of their God. In the midst of a pagan palace of pagan religions, she spoke of God. She told him the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. And during quiet palace nights, she would even whisper in Moses’ ear the sacred name of Yahweh.

Moses knew the sacred name before he was able to talk. His mother told her son who he was and whose he was. Who whispers the name of Jesus to the children today? Who will tell today’s children the stories of Jesus, the stories of faith and hope?

In the midst of plenty and of privilege, who will keep the name of God alive? In the midst of a host of secular gods, prolific lures, and growing materialistic expectations, who will say, “Remember that you are a child of God. Remember that God alone is your strength”? In the midst of the trappings of luxury and expansive lifestyles, who will whisper the sacred name in the ear of every child?

The story of Moses is one of auspicious beginnings. The message of the storyteller seems clear. God is intimately involved and present in our lives. God is present in the cleverness of the Hebrew midwife. God is present in the softened heart of an Egyptian princess, in the quick thinking of an older sister, and in the religious fervor of a mother. (Let us take note that all of these principals are women! It took at least four good women to build one great man!)

God is present. That’s the gospel in the story. God is working out a purpose in history, just as God always has and always will.

Week 2: An Incredible Theophany

Exodus 2:11-3:9

Similar to the story of Jesus, we have no stories from the boyhood of Moses. The storyteller moves us quickly from infancy to adulthood. We read a summary of his childhood under Pharaoh’s daughter (2:10) and are moved immediately to this statement: “One day, after Moses had grown up” (2:11).

Moses was forced into exile from Egypt. Having been observed in the act of striking and killing an Egyptian taskmaster, he traveled to the land of Midian. Most historians believe the area lay along what is now the eastern coast of the Gulf of ‘Aqabah. There Moses assumed the life of a shepherd. He married and had several children. Moses’ life was comfortable and relaxed. He grew old in this land, and eventually attained the traditional age of retirement. Old age apparently felt good to Moses. He retained good health and vigor as he approached his ninth decade of life. Moses said to himself, “My life has been good. I am satisfied.”

The storyteller sets the stage for us in strikingly understandable images. A settled comfortable life with children and grandchildren was pleasing. However, God had another plan. God intruded with a *theophany*. A theophany is an experience where God unexpectedly interrupts or encroaches upon the ordinary affairs of life. The intrusion is absolutely unsought. This unsolicited incursion of God into the flow of life is exactly what happened to Moses.

One day Moses was tending his sheep near the foot of a sacred mountain. As he looked into the distance, he saw something burning. The fire did not seem to spread. Neither did it go out. And it did not consume that which was burning. The fire simply burned.

The well-known burning bush shrub provides exciting color to many home landscapes each fall. This simple shrub transforms into glorious colors of red and orange for a few weeks. The plant derives its name, of course, from the story of Moses in Exodus 3. In that story, a bush was on fire, but it was not consumed.

Moses decided that he must go and check out this strange sight. His life was radically transformed by that decision. Have you ever made a quick decision that significantly reoriented the flow of your life?

As he approached the bush, he heard his name being called: “Moses, Moses!” (3:4). Right away Moses no doubt assumed he was in some trouble. Bushes do not call out our names, even burning bushes.

“Remove the sandals from your feet,” the voice commanded. “The place on which you are standing is holy ground,” it continued (3:5). We can safely assume that Moses kicked off his shoes rather quickly. Moses’ name was called. The command was given. Off came his shoes.

Somewhere I heard a lecturer suggest that those who go shoeless on a regular basis have an average increased life expectancy of up to three years. Perhaps kicking off your shoes under your desk during the day or under the pew in Sunday worship has longevity benefits!

Slowly Moses became aware of who spoke to him. There is no evidence in scripture to suggest that Moses was a particularly religious man up to this point in time. He was not irreligious, nor could he even be considered agnostic. He was probably a passively religious person in his shepherd’s lifestyle.

Gradually Moses recalled the name of the God that his mother whispered in his ear as a small child in the palace of the Pharaoh. Moses thought to himself, “This must be the God of my mother and of my people.” Childhood stories and sacred memories came flooding back. Moses fell to his knees. In a theophany, in an unexpected interruption of life by God, we kneel!

God continued the message: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings” (3:7).

Moses listened. He remembered images of the pitifully wretched conditions of slavery that he had seen so many years ago—images of his people trampling clay for bricks in the mud pits, images of taskmasters with huge whips cracking regularly over the people’s backs. If Moses had dared, he might have retorted, “Well, God, it is about time. After all, it has been more than four hundred years!”

“I know their sufferings,” said the voice. “I have heard their cry.” These words may well affirm the single most dominant part of God’s nature: God does hear the cry, the hurt, and the pain of God’s people. God has a special “ear” for the oppressed. God knows the aching heart of every human being. This is part of the good news in the message of our Exodus storyteller.

God knows your occasional fear of dying, the times of emptiness or loneliness, the uncertain sexuality, the hidden abuse in a marriage or a family, or the bouts with depression. God knows. Is not the nature of the God revealed in Jesus Christ right here? Is not the word from the burning bush an anticipation of the very nature of Jesus Christ?

Moses undoubtedly responded positively to this good news. He seemed to say, “Thank you, Lord. Thank you for hearing the cry of your people. But, now, what are you going to do about it?”

At this point the real measure and impact of the theophany becomes clear in the story: God offered a startling observation: “Wrong question, Moses. It is not what am I going to do about it; rather, I am calling *you*.”

“Me, Lord?”

“Yes, you, Moses. I’m sending you to confront the oppressor, to speak strong words to Pharaoh, to lead my children out of Egypt.”

“Whoa! Wait just a minute, Lord. Me? You want me to lead people out of Egypt and across the desert?” Moses began to comprehend the radical dimensions of this theophany.

Week 3: Arguing the Mission

Exodus 3:10-4:20

Have you ever carried on a lively debate with God? Have you ever tried to change God’s mind on some matter? Have you argued with God about some issue or circumstance in your life? Moses’ first step in his journey of discipleship is to do exactly this. He argues with the God of the ages!

Moses quickly becomes defensive in this extraordinary calling he has received. Moses is convinced he cannot respond. He plays the game of “Yes, but” with God. Any time we feel called or compelled to do something we would rather not do, we are tempted to “Yes, but” the person making the request. Moses plays the “Yes, but” game with God for the next segment of our story. He “Yes, but” God at least five times.

First, Moses asks a simple question: “But . . . who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (3:11). Probably Moses was simply thinking, “Hey, I am too old for this job. I’ve just gotten my pension check into a direct deposit cycle in my bank account! I’m enjoying my AARP discounts. I am not ready for a whole new mission in life.” Moses was about eighty years old when the call of God came. This is hardly the time when we think of a whole new vocation in our lives!

God simply says, “I will be with you, Moses.” God does not acknowledge Moses’ argument. Neither does God acknowledge Moses’ age or stage in life. God simply calls.

Moses suggests a second argument. He asks God for God’s name.

The *name* of God was closely intertwined with the *nature* of God in the ancient mind. Thus, the writer of Psalm 23 says, “He leads me in right paths *for his name’s sake*” (Psalm 23:3, emphasis mine).

Moses was actually asking how he could offer the definitive nature of their God to the Israelites. “If I go, and they ask me about you, what shall I say?” seems to be Moses’ question.

The response of the voice from the bush is one of the most mysterious in all of scripture. God says, “I am who I am.” Therefore, Moses is to tell the people that “I am” has sent him.

We are not able to probe the mystery of God’s nature. God preserves God’s mystery for all time. God is not about to open up the full mystery of Being to Moses in this moment of Moses’ life.

Perhaps God is offering a “name” that is only finally completed in the person of Jesus. The Gospel of John may be a partial unfolding of the mystery of God’s words to Moses in Exodus: Jesus uses various images to suggest Jesus’ identity (John 6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 15:1, 10:11, 11:25).

Unflappable in his desire for some kind of permanent deferment, Moses raises a third argument. “But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’ ” (4:1). In effect, Moses is saying, “What if I go to preach and nobody listens or even cares?” This is one fear of every preacher: “What if the people do not listen? What if they do not come? What if my words make no contact and no difference at all?”

God replies convincingly: “Moses, I will create signs and wonders before you. I will make the fruits of your ministry happen. I will make things happen in your wake.” That’s quite a promise.

Moses relentlessly hurls his fourth “Yes, but” at God. Emotions are running high. Moses trembles at the thought of what might be unavoidable. He says, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent. . . . I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (4:10). Moses pleads a new tact: “I mumble a lot, Lord. I can’t think fast on my feet. And I don’t always use good grammar.”

God’s response to Moses’ self-imposed ineptness is wonderful: “I will be with your mouth” (4:12). We remember the promises to the disciples of the New Testament where they are told by Jesus that they will receive the words to speak when they stand before power and before enemies (see Matthew 10:19 and notice the remarkable resemblance to the Exodus text).

The fifth “Yes, but” exasperates the patience of God. Moses says, “O my Lord, *please send someone else*” (4:13). Here is a last desperate plea to avoid the interruption of a very pleasant existence. “I really do enjoy retirement, Lord. And those senior discounts at the fast-food counters and movie theaters are really nice. You don’t really want me to go to Egypt, do you?”

With the fifth “Yes, but” the storyteller says, “Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses” (4:14). God is frustrated with all of Moses’ excuses—and ours! In the end, God tells Moses that Aaron will be called to be alongside of Moses. Moses will give Aaron the words of God to speak, and God will be with *both* of their mouths. In essence God says, “No more objections, Moses. Now go!”

Moses went in faith. Someone has said that faith is most simply “waiting for the rest of the story to unfold.”

You may be called. You may even have a theophany! God may interrupt your life—either briefly, or for the long haul. You may “Yes, but” God a few times yourself. However, in the end, you will find yourself saying, “OK, Lord! Here I am. I have heard your call. I think I know your name and your nature. Here I am, Lord. Lead me to where the hurt is. Help me set your people free. And I will go.”

Week 4: A Miraculous Fairway

Exodus 14:1-15:21

I recently saw an advertisement for a roller coaster in an amusement park. The ad read, “Two minutes and fifteen seconds of the biggest thrill this side of a bungee cord.” Such description cannot begin to compare with the Red Sea crossing in Exodus. There are many miracles and wonders in the Bible. Few are as dramatic as this one. One has to wonder whether even Moses expected this much drama from his efforts!

A very quiet and shy minister was visiting a parishioner in a nursing home. He sat opposite her wheelchair and they talked for some time. Finally, as he prepared to leave, she asked him if he would pray for her. Specifically, she asked him to pray that she would walk again. The minister felt a distinct uncertainty inside, but he obliged. He prayed for her life and health, and for God’s healing power so she could walk again.

When he finished praying, there was a strange light in the woman’s eyes. “Pastor,” she said, “would you please help me stand up?” The minister was stunned at her request but could only oblige her. She took his hands and stood up, haltingly at first, but then with growing strength. Soon she was moving her feet, walking, jumping up and down, and shouting—attracting the attention of every other resident and staff member in the area.

The minister was not sure what to do. He backed out of the room, turned toward the corridor, and walked with increasing haste toward the door. Once outside, he raced to his car, got in, grabbed a tight hold on the steering wheel, looked up toward heaven, and said, “Lord, don’t you ever do that to me again!”

Do you suppose Moses felt something like that as the waters parted the Red Sea at his command?

The Red Sea crossing presents a story that is always exciting in the telling and retelling. It has a way of binding us in its spell.

Our twenty-first-century mentality seems to need to explain a miracle. In many ways, we need to explain away a miracle. We seemingly need reasons for the wonder. Ours is an age that seems to need explanations. We cannot merely accept that which defies rational interpretation. We attempt to master the sacred with our minds.

In this story, as before, we must remember that the storyteller is preaching. He is giving us a lot more than word pictures about winds blowing water around. In relating the story of crossing the Red Sea, the storyteller is preaching.

We *may* ask this: "What is his message?"

We learn that journeying with God is an adventure. In eastern Pennsylvania, an ecumenical retreat center features many beautiful hiking trails. At the head of one of those trails is a marvelous sign. It reads simply, "The Great Walk." The trail fits that description precisely. So does the journey of Christian discipleship! Once you put yourself in God's hands, be ready for adventure! That is exactly what Moses did. Moses not only put himself, but a whole nation into the hands of God.

The storyteller in Exodus is looking back. And he is saying, "To be God's people is genuinely exciting." To really be God's people is authentically exciting. If you put your hand into the hand of God, be ready for things to happen!

It is possible to miss the adventure, even when you are right in the middle of it. But the adventure is real; it is sure. In part, adventure is what caused the Bible to be written. The Bible is the written record of God's active accompaniment of God's people. The promise is sure: more adventure always lies ahead.

The storyteller also proclaims this particular event as a central act of God in history. Regardless of the specific details, this is a major decisive event in God's overview of history. The story of the Red Sea crossing is to the Hebrew scriptures what the story of Easter is to the New Testament.

The climactic Easter event gives rise to genuine mystery and abiding wonder. Easter is the definitive saving event of the New Testament story. The barrier of death is broken. All of the remainder of the gospel story now makes sense.

Similarly, the Red Sea crossing is an event cloaked with mystery and abiding wonder. It is the story of the deliverance of a people out of bondage. The exodus is the singular saving event upon which the rest of the Hebrew Bible is built.

We don't know with objective accuracy what happened at the Red Sea in the thirteenth century B.C.E. We only know that an abiding covenant was the result. God promised to be faithful to a people for all time.

The storyteller also proclaims that we are held in God's hand at all times. Life is not without pain or suffering or even dying. Life is not without setbacks or doubts or uncertainty. All of these things are part of living. They do not happen as a part of God's plan, but they are a part of living on this planet.

The message is steadfast and consistent. When the enemy is chasing us (the enemy of death or pain or hurt or disappointment) and when the churning unknown lies before us like a vast ocean (family, health, financial stability), God is still with us. We have a sign that God is faithful and present.

Life is not without setbacks, doubt, and uncertainty. Such issues are part of living. But God remains close to us and with us in each new situation. Specifically—in the exodus story's imagery—God will be with us even when the enemy is in hot pursuit and when the future looks bleak. God will sustain us, uphold us, and then graciously receive us at the end of our journey.

Week 5: Morning by Morning

Exodus 16

Within several weeks after leaving Egypt, the people were murmuring and muttering against Moses on several counts. Some people love to murmur in the church. Do you know anyone who murmurs? It is part of the liability of leadership that people murmur from time to time.

The people murmured against Moses. Moses must have had a difficult time with all of it. Surely it was not easy keeping this ragtag procession going in the wilderness. It felt very much like trying to keep a whole host of balls in the air at one time.

I once heard that life is like a chicken trying to lay an egg on an escalator. Just as she settles in, the bottom drops out. Moses must have known that feeling. The first weeks in the desert were simply awful.

The providing nature of God permeates the biblical narratives. The Israelites complained against Moses when the Egyptians were chasing them. They complained when they were thirsty. And then they complained that they were hungry.

Certainly this incident reflects thickheadedness and hard-heartedness on the part of the people. They simply would not trust Moses to be leading by God's will in this matter. They had crossed the Red Sea on dry land, and seen the Egyptian army drown in the sea. Yet they did not understand.

I imagine that Moses turned to God in prayer. He prayed, not in frustration with God, but in frustration with the people's complaints. He might have prayed something like this: "O Lord, what shall I do? How do I handle this situation? I have run out of ideas."

Most of us have prayed that kind of prayer at least some of the time in our lives. "O Lord, what do I do now?"

God responded to Moses. God would act. But God said that action would come in a very special way. God would act so as to both feed the people *and* teach them something about the meaning of discipleship. Here, in the story of Moses from 3,300 years ago, we have an episode in which God tries to form disciples.

Thus we come to the story of the manna. What was this manna? Our storyteller tells us that it was a "fine flaky substance" and "the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Moses told the people simply, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." A friend once offered his own guess. He said that the manna was an ancient form of grits—both are described as "fine, flaky substance" and both are absolutely no good as leftovers!

But there was a catch to this wondrous gift of God. This is what the Lord commanded: "Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons . . . in [your] tents."

"Gather as much as you need for each person in your household!" That was the divine command. There was to be no greed, and no hoarding. If one person was stronger than another, he or she was not to collect more manna purely on the basis of extra strength. Each person was to collect an omer for each member of the family. An omer was about one and one-half quarts.

Some of us remember the periods of rationing during the days of World War II. Rationing is actually a very biblical notion!

We are becoming painfully aware that unnecessary accumulation through power and/or greed clearly means serious deprivation for others. The earth supplies an abundance of enough for each of its inhabitants. But there is no overabundance for some without major life-threatening shortages

for others.

The Israelites, of course, did not always comply with the restriction. Some of them took more than they needed, and tried to store it for the next day—in case there was no manna on that day. But overnight the manna became foul and rotted. It did not last. The people were forced to learn to trust the providence of God.

God, through Moses, was training them to trust—day by day, morning by morning.

What is the message in this? That food will always be available? Perhaps. But surely there is a greater message. The story tells us that the only enduring value in life is faith and trust in God.

For this reason of trust Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Some have tried to rework the phrasing to read, “Give us this day enough bread for tomorrow.” But I am convinced that such renderings destroy the original intent of the prayer. The disciple is to petition God each day for that day’s provisions. And tomorrow we petition God for tomorrow’s provisions.

The story concludes when the people create a symbol of God’s trustworthiness. “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.’”

Here a jar of manna was to be a symbol on the altar of the Lord for all the years to come. When the children of the Israelites asked, “What does that jar mean?” they were to be told the story of how God provides.

What symbol works today so that when our children ask, “What does that figure on the altar mean?” we may similarly respond, “It is a sign that God is faithful. God provides enough for all.”

If we can conquer greed, and if we can learn to live more simply, and if we can learn to trust, there will be an abundance of enough for all God’s children, day by day, morning by morning, throughout the journey of our lives.

Week 6: An Extraordinary Offering

Exodus 35:4-36:7

The wandering nation of people needed a designated space for worship. They were God’s people. They wanted to honor God with an appropriate setting for community worship. Something must be created that would reverence God, provide adequate sacred space, and yet still be portable for the unknown wanderings ahead.

A worthy tabernacle would also be made of quality products: jewels and other precious stones, durable hardwoods, fine linens, and such. Where could such valuable materials be found? Moses decided to receive an offering.

The call went out for voluntary gifts. The people responded enthusiastically. Gifts came pouring in. The size and number of the gifts suddenly seemed to overwhelm the project managers. They went to Moses with a most unusual request. “Tell the people to stop, Moses. We have enough to do the job. We have more than enough. We are being inundated with offerings,” they seemed to say.

Moses listened to the artisans’ story. Then he went to the people with this stunning proclamation: “No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.” In effect, Moses said, “Stop bringing your offerings. We already have more than enough to do the job.”

What becomes important is the *why* of the story. Why did the people respond so completely and so generously? What was the amazing secret of this offering? We can learn from what happened in

this desert offering more than three millennia ago!

First, there seems to be a great love for the holy place. Translated into our time, this means a great love for the church. Whatever else may be in doubt, people seem to have an innate, God-given love for the holy place. A great love for the “church” thrived in the desert, in the hearts of the Hebrew people. They found joy in giving, and they knew God had a serious claim on their lives. They knew an innate durability in the holy place. The ancient Hebrews gave abundantly, generously, because they knew they were investing in something that would last.

Second, the story suggests that the trust level was very high. Integrity was in place. Through a multitude of experiences, confidence had grown. The God of Moses was clearly among them. Integrity is very important to the church. Integrity was present in the desert. Thus, resources came in abundance.

Third, the capacity to give was present. Who would have believed that wandering nomads in the desert could make such an offering? Perhaps they had plundered the Egyptians before leaving. Maybe they had collected some precious valuables along the way. The point is this: their capacity to give was greater than they knew. But Moses knew.

We sometimes cry “poor” today. We have cried “poor” for so long that we have talked ourselves into believing that we are poor. The capacity to give is present for most people. Very few congregations are overextended. A great teacher of stewardship once said, “Not one church in a hundred has any real notion of its power.” The offerings began to pour in.

Fourth, this offering was a freewill offering. The storyteller makes this abundantly clear. Key phrases are used throughout. Consider all of the phrases in one short story—some of them used several times.

“Everyone whose heart was stirred.”

“Everyone whose spirit was willing.”

“A willing heart.”

“Everyone . . . whose hearts made them willing.”

“A freewill offering to the LORD.”

Paul writes, “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:7). His words form the foundation of what happens to us and to what happened in the desert long ago.

Authentic believer giving is not a tax or a tax deduction. Neither is it dues or some legalism. Giving is not what I “owe” my church. Giving is not a safe passage to heaven. Giving is a freely offered response to the goodness of God in my life. Giving among the community of believers has a whole different standard from the world.

Benjamin Franklin offers a valuable testimony in his autobiography. His witness demonstrates the power of good growth giving in the human spirit. In this setting, Franklin is listening to the preaching of George Whitfield.

[During the sermon] I perceived he intended to finish with a Collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my Pocket a handful of Copper Money, three or four silver Dollars, and five Pistoles in Gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the Coppers. Another Stroke of his Oratory made me asham'd of that, and determin'd to give the Silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I empti'd my Pocket wholly into the collector's Dish, Gold and all.

(Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964], 177)

Is this not one clear picture of the way God works—a rustling in the heart? Is this not a graphic illustration of our storyteller when he says, “The hearts of the people were stirred”?

Finally, the story proclaims this important truth: “There is enough to do what God wants us to do.” Notice that these words come from the craftsmen, the artisans. These are not the words of Moses. Moses was a learner in this situation.

One of my favorite phrases is “abundance of enough.” That is the nature of God’s blessing. God does not often give us everything we want; but God does give us everything we need. Probably not a lot of cushion! Probably not a surplus! But God will supply an abundance of enough.

Some eternal principles are at work in this story. We hear a simple promise from the author of faith. If we stand on the promise and use theologically appropriate methods, the gifts will be present.

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