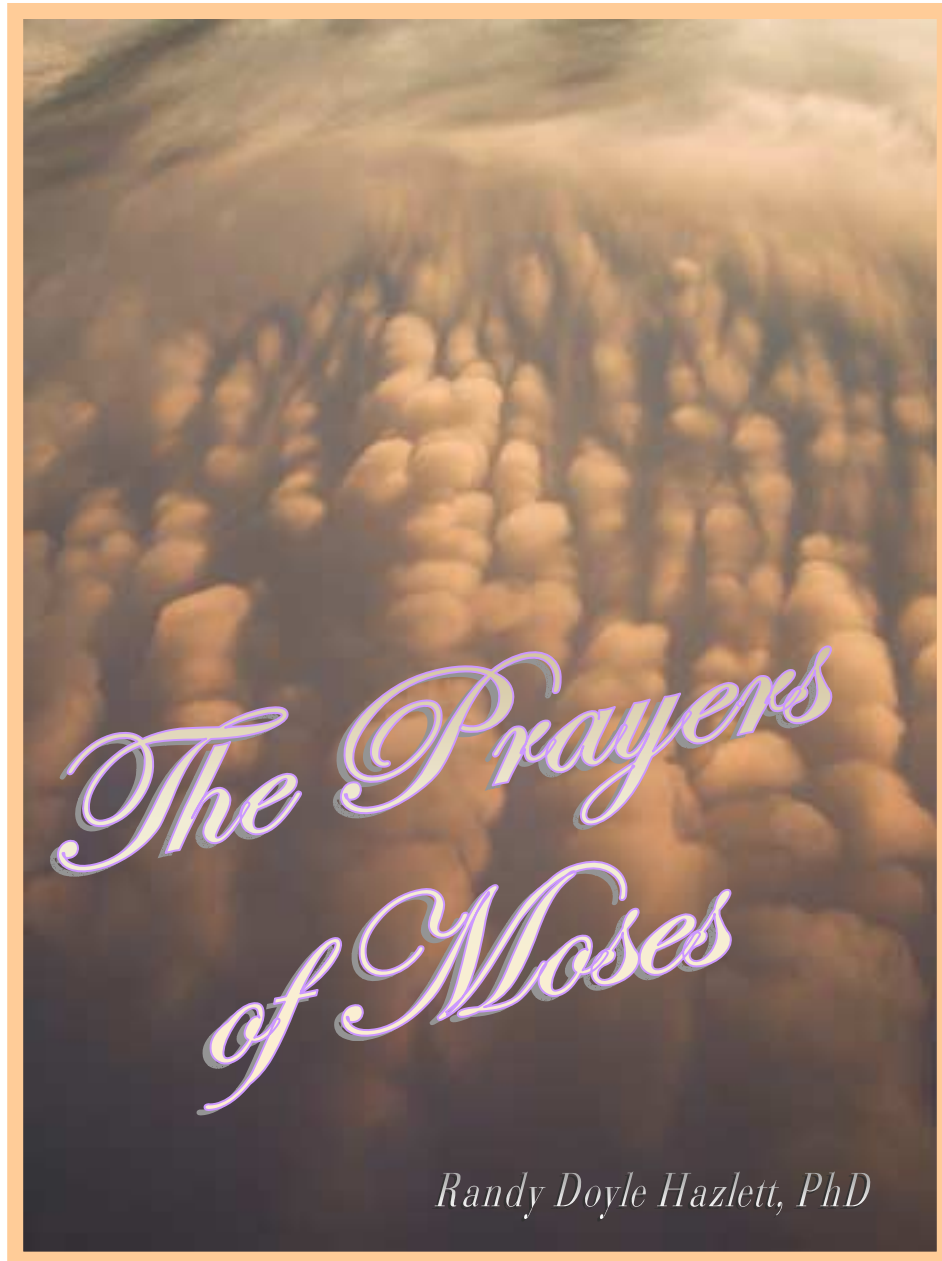


Foreword

As a student of the Bible, I began to internalize the prayers of Moses during a time of personal economic crisis. I knew I was following God's plan for my life, yet I was not achieving success. I thought I was being obedient to God's direction, but I was not seeing any fruit. In my prayerlife, I cried out to God to either bless me or remove me from the face of this earth. I was serious with My Creator. My petitions mirrored those of Moses. I took notes on Moses' conversations with God. I studied them. Nevertheless, these were my prayers – my heart exposed.

If I may set the stage, I had been employed in the R&D department of a major oil company for more than a decade. In my Sunday School class, Zig Ziglar planted a personal *What Would Jesus Do (WWJD)* challenge through his recommendation to read the book by Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps*. I read it, and the wheels were set in motion. As an action plan, I began documenting accounts where the hand of God was evident in my life. I eventually assembled a collection of such anecdotal stories and searched for a publisher. There were no takers. Instead, I published the series online for any and all seekers who happened to find their way to my little corner of obscure cyberspace. The Lord was leading me in another direction, but the writing experience was refreshing and satisfying, as it elucidated God's intervention in my life.

During the oil and gas merger frenzy leading up to the formation of the so-called supermajors, the Lord opened up a door of opportunity for me to form my own business with a generous exit package. I initiated a two-pronged approach: launching my own research company, while pursuing my passion, writing Christian music. As one with no formal music training and no vocal or instrumental talent, when God began



flooding my mind and thoughts with musical ideas as a consequence of prayer, it was a no-brainer that I was to pursue and honor God through His music. What I lacked in ability was compensated somewhat by computer skills. My computer soundcard became my instrument – my band. Without a personal fortune to bankroll either of these pursuits, I sought funding for research and sent out demo and promotional packets to every seemingly open avenue. While I did form my own record label, both prongs were unplugged, as rejection followed rejection.

Did God not realize I had a family to support? Why had God led me down this path not to succeed? Why had I been the recipient of God’s gift of music without it bearing fruit? As the exit money package dwindled, so did my patience. I cried out to the Lord in the manner of Moses. I became desperate for God to act. Had I not been faithful? As often the case, in the month I projected by bank account to enter the red, God extended His hand of provision. Looking back at that situation, I was compelled to assemble my layman’s study on the prayers of Moses. When you know God, know you are in line with God’s truth, and are desperate for God’s intervention, follow the prayer trail of the most humble man to walk the face of the earth. Study the Prayers of Moses.

In His Love,

Randy Doyle Hazlett

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Cover Art: The cloud formation was photographed by the author outside his Dallas home on March 7, 2001. The image is entitled, “Hands of the Multitude.”

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What Is Prayer?

The subject of prayer divides people: those who pray from those who do not. For many, prayer is a church thing — something to recite as a formal part of worship. For others, prayer is the repetition of the words of others. To some, prayers are those things we teach our children to say at the dinner table and before bedtime. All too often prayers are empty in that nothing is expected in return.

My friends, prayer is so much more than this. Prayer unleashes God's power in our lives. Prayer is a perpetual acknowledgement of our dependence upon God, Our Creator and Sustainer. Prayer is a window on our heart to be seen by an Almighty God, Our Judge. Prayer is an avenue for God to give meaning and clarity to life. Prayer is our best defense in the spiritual battle in us and around us. Without prayer we are weak, malleable, fearful, vulnerable, and carnal.

I akin prayerlife to a game of pin the tail on the donkey. Devoid of a true prayerlife is the fellow who is blindfolded, spun around, but still asked to find the target. His chances are slim to none in recovering God's best for his life. Then there is the intermittent prayer warrior. He prays fervently when in crisis mode, but returns to wander through life when covered with God's blessings. He is like the fellow, who though blindfolded, is pointed in the appropriate target direction. He may find the mark after a number of near misses. Then there is the man or woman after God's own heart who doesn't dare take a step without knowing God walks with him. This kind sees the mark and is rewarded with success. I remind you that all these are playing the game. That is to say, all have said at least one prayer in common, the prayer for salvation. Then there are those who

are not even in the game, which we can identify as non-Christians.

At this point, I must stop and address what constitutes a prayer. We see images of non-Christians bowing in the midst of fervent 'prayer'. Muslims indeed engage in their ritualistic prayers, I'm afraid to say, more regularly than most Christians. As they chant and face Mecca, are they engaged in true prayer? To answer this, we assert a definition of prayer as a channel of communication between a man, woman, or child and a superior being who is capable of hearing and somehow intervening on behalf of the one praying. If the intended recipient is either nonexistent or impotent, then the very act of prayer is a ruse. The Bible does refer to the propagation of *The Lie* which will deceive many, even the elect, if that were possible. Is Islam *The Lie*? Is the popular view that all worship the same god by different names *The Lie*? Satan is the Father of Lies (John 8:44) and is certainly behind the proliferation of all such false hope. Our authority, the Bible, says in the John 14:6,

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

We also cite 1 Peter 3:12,

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Who can be considered righteous? Who has not done evil? We must conclude that the offering of one-sided petitions fails to meet our definition of prayer.

The proposed definition, however, does allow the prayerful worship of Satan. Satan exists and certainly has power. In the

Biblical account of the temptations of Jesus, we see that Satan offers worldly power in exchange for worship.

Again, the devil took him [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give to you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Matthew 4:8-10

We have no reason to expect his *modus operandi* have changed. The prayer of the Satanic worshipper is heard and wields power. Woe to those who are caught up in such damning action.

Unfortunately, many are engaged in Satanic avenues without recognizing the path as one of evil. Channeling, transcendental meditation, hypnosis, and other forms of self-surrender are points of entry for Satanic influence. Outside of Halloween, often referred to as Satan's holiday, Earth Day celebrations expose more ritualistic arts, which seem harmless enough, but serve as portals for a myriad of God-forbidden worship practices. Any attempt to replace God with a Mother Earth or Cosmic Force is a Satan-centered guise. Holding conversations with the dead or with supernatural entities other than God himself IS Satanic prayer. Never call a psychic hotline. Throw away those rabbit feet and Ouija boards. Erase the word luck from your vocabulary.

And then there are our brothers, the Jews. The media has given us striking images of those gathered at the Wailing Wall, calling out to God with such passion. What about these prayers since the Jew and Christian acknowledge the same God? Does that not fall into a different category than those who pray to a false God? From a Biblical viewpoint on prayer, while actions may be in earnest, the so-called sinner's prayer is the only prayer

which merits God's response from the non-Christian. This is the prayer for salvation, acknowledging that there is no hope to meet God's standards outside of Jesus Christ. When God looks upon the man who confesses that Jesus is Lord, their unworthiness is masked by Jesus' atoning blood. That is why the Christian's prayer is fruitful and the non-Christian's prayer is not. It is wrong to assert that God does not hear, for nothing escapes God's attention. It is a matter of responsiveness. The Christian's presence in God's company is acceptable because we have been redeemed by Christ's actions on the cross. Jesus bore the punishment for our sin. We are reminded of the Levitical law in Hebrews 9:22 which says, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." So what about the Jews, the guardians of Levitical law, who have not recognized Jesus as their Messiah?

The Jews are still the Apple of God's Eye. God continues to bless for generations because of the faithfulness of their forefathers. We find within the proclamation of the Ten Commandments by God as received by Moses himself,

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Exodus 20:4

Such is the case with the modern Jew. The Bible speaks of the place of honor given to the descendents of Abraham through Isaac.

And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’” Zechariah 8:22-23

Still, the hope of the Jew lies in Jesus Christ. According to the prophesy recorded in the book of Revelation, in the final days of the earth as we know it, salvation will come to Israel in record numbers. Jews will evangelize the world, and they will be able to recognize Christ as the Messiah. Until that time, we hold the Jew close to our heart, as the Gospel came to the Gentiles through Jewish messengers only after it was rejected by Jesus’ own people. We should pray for the Jews for spiritual discernment. They are our heritage.

So then, what is true prayer? Prayer is simply talking to God. It can be done anywhere, anytime, audibly, or in the quiet recesses of our minds. Prayer is an essential part of the Christian walk. That is not to say that the life of a praying person is devoid of trouble, tribulation, and sin, for none is perfect beyond Our Lord Jesus Christ. The praying Christian is simply better equipped for living and more at peace with life’s sharp turns.

What should be the subject of prayer? Are there things that are too trivial for us to bother an omnipotent God? Jesus’ own prayers have been the subject of many an analysis. It is certainly justifiable to use prayer to express thanks, devotion, adoration, needs, and petitions. Petitions can be for ourselves as well as others, but asking for things is such a small part of prayer. We are naïve if we think that we can change the mind of an omniscient God. Alternatively, prayer helps us realign ourselves with God’s plan. Every decision in life should be fortified with

prayer. Nothing is too trivial. Nothing is too difficult for God. He knows our needs, but prayer initializes our slate and allows God to empower us to do beyond our limited capabilities.

Does God speak back? While this is our fondest desire, the Israelites held God in such awe that they petitioned Moses after the giving of the Ten Commandments.

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” Exodus 20:18-19

God spoke to Moses in the hearing of the people to authenticate Moses’ role as spiritual leader. God can speak audibly in the languages of men.

On a recent trip to the Big Island of Hawaii, my family attended a protestant church service presided over by a retired serviceman. His words stuck with me as he said, “In my old age, I am convinced that the Holy Spirit does not speak to us in ways we cannot understand.” If God wants to speak, He has any number of ways to accomplish this task: audible speech, the Bible, dreams and visions, a third party, such as a preacher, and directly to our spirit. If God wants to deliver a message, is His arm too short? The God of Creation will never fail to accomplish His will.

As I explored God’s Word further, I saw a pattern where patriarchs of the faith called upon the Lord. They asked of God simple, straightforward questions, and received simple, straightforward answers. For example, King David petitioned the Lord when on the run from Saul.

When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.” David said, “O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant.”

And the LORD said, “He will.”

Again David asked, “Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?”

And the LORD said, “They will.”

So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

Simple, direct, often yes-or-no questions are the template of Old Testament prayer. The character of God is unchanging; thus, I have made it a practice to petition God in a similar manner with expectation that the Holy Spirit will yield the response in ways that I can understand. While we may not expect, or perhaps not even be able to handle, verbal response, the peace that comes with prayerful decisions is itself evidence of answered prayer.

While the components of prayer are important, this book deals specifically with the prayers of Moses. As such, we look at Moses’ conversations with God as recorded in the Bible, our authority. We find prayers that wield mighty power alongside those that show human weakness. We find the spiritual journey of the one the Bible calls the most humble man to walk the face of the earth. Moses’ conversations with God are nothing less

than remarkable. So, is studying the prayers of Moses simply of historical interest? It is my assertion that we have much to learn from perhaps the greatest prayer warrior ever, aside from Jesus himself. We should strive for such an intimacy with God. The prayers of Moses have given me great comfort, encouragement, and boldness in my own conversations with God. It is my hope that this study of the prayerlife of Moses can offer you the same, but before we examine his prayers, we must understand Moses, the man. Before we can understand Moses the man, we must be introduced to his god, The LORD, Jehovah.

Ground Zero: Know God and His attributes

The Character of Moses

The debates go on about the relative importance of genetics versus environment that are responsible for character. While there is no denying the Hebrew lineage which placed Moses in the line of God's blessing, there is no escaping the impact of environment on Moses' life.

Moses was born into slavery. His ancestor, Joseph, was sold to a caravan of merchants on their way to Egypt by his own half-brothers, because of the favoritism overtly displayed within a dysfunctional family. Yet because of his faith, Joseph rose above his circumstances to second in command in that nation, allowing him to save his family from a lengthy regional draught. He brought his aged father and all his brothers to live in the best part of the land of Egypt. There they remained, beyond the time of draught, only to be forced into slave labor by the next generation of rulers who knew nothing of Joseph. Even in the time of Joseph, we are told of the deep antisemitism displayed at the banquet which Joseph threw for his brothers before revealing his identity.

They served him [Joseph] by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.

Genesis 43:32

As the Israelites multiplied, so did the hostility of one people for another.

The Egyptian Pharaoh embarked on an extreme course to curb the threat growing within. Midwives were instructed to kill all Hebrew sons. Daughters were allowed to live. When this

edict failed, Pharaoh ordered the people to throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile. It was under these conditions that Moses was brought into the world.

When his family could no longer hide him, they fashioned a waterproof basket for the 3-month-old and placed baby Moses among the reeds of the Nile. Moses' sister, Miriam, watched over the papyrus basket to await its outcome. Pharaoh's own daughter found the child and took pity on him. In Exodus 2:10, we are told, "She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'" The name was similar to the Hebrew word for 'draw out'. Miriam, showing herself, volunteered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child, allowing Moses to return to his true home until weaned. We are told that Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her own child – surely a child of privilege and great learning. Still, she knew Moses was a Hebrew, and we are told that Moses identified with the Hebrews as "his own people."

We are never given any indication that Moses was instructed in the religious ways of his people. His parents, Amram and Jacobed, are introduced in the book of Exodus as faceless members of the house of Levi. This was the priestly clan of Israel, opening the possibility of some early training in the things of God, yet how much theological teaching could be retained by a toddler? The time in his Hebrew home did allow him opportunity to know his siblings and his roots. Still, Moses grew up with the polytheistic cultural practices of his adopted family – a culture which worshiped the likes of Isis, Ra, and over 700 gods and goddesses. This is certainly an unlikely start for The Lawgiver.

The slave who grew up in the midst of Pharaoh's court was to experience even greater dichotomy. After he had grown up, the Bible says that Moses went out one day to a place where his own people were at hard labor. It was here where the life of privilege ended. Moses murdered an Egyptian whom he had witnessed

beating a Hebrew – an act that was fully within Egyptian law. The Hebrews *were* property. When word got out, Moses was forced to flee the country. Pharaoh had given orders to put Moses to death because of his actions. In his escape route, Moses crossed the desert into Midian. Now the Deliverer was himself an outcast. He was unable to draw strength from his faith, because he had none. He was unable to call upon his god, because he knew him not.

Moses forged a new life for himself. He found a temporary home with Jethro, the priest of Midian, and married one of his daughters. Moses began a family, but apparently he was restless in his present, because he named his firstborn Gershom, meaning “I have become an alien in a foreign land.” Moses failed to recognize that Egypt was also a foreign land for his people. Meanwhile, Exodus 2:25 says, “So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”

It was while tending the flocks, going about his daily work that Moses observed the burning bush which was not consumed. It was an angel of the LORD. It was only human curiosity which drew Moses near, but God spoke to Moses from within the bush. Here we document the first conversation of Moses with his god – the first prayer of Moses. Moses had done nothing extraordinarily deserving of a divine visitation. He had abandoned the faith of his forefathers, committed murder, assumed the life of a fugitive, and taken a foreign wife. God must have seen the character yet to be developed in Moses and approached him based upon Moses’ future faith. God simply called out the name of Moses. Moses could have turned and run, but instead he replied, “Here I am.” God told Moses to remove his sandals, because the place where he was standing was holy ground.

God proceeded to introduce himself to Moses.

Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:6

Why was an introduction necessary? We are told of no prior worship by Moses, but his actions indicated reverence and possible shame for his past. God, however, does not dredge up the past, but rather gives Moses a mission.

The LORD said, “I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

That was quite a request of a non-worshipper and fugitive from the law. Moses naively responded, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” It was then that Moses received his first promise from God.

And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” Exodus 3:12

At this point, Moses was perhaps a little apprehensive about his lack of knowledge of the Hebrew god. He was concerned about what his fellow Israelites would say, although God's instructions were for Moses to go to Pharaoh to secure the release of the slaves, not to get approval from the Hebrews to lead them.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" Exodus 3:13

Moses sought the name which would carry authority, but at the same time, this was Moses' petition to know God personally. God gave him his name and the authority to act on his behalf.

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14

God proceeded to unveil his plan for Moses, including the very words he was to say to the Israelite elders and to Pharaoh himself. God foretold that he would perform compelling wonders before Pharaoh and that the Israelites would leave with the treasures of Egypt in their possession.

Moses again asked for logistical detail instead of being obedient and trusting God. He was still concerned about what others would think. He wanted signs of God's power to convince his own people that he could bring them out and signs of God's authority to make demands upon the leader of the most powerful nation on earth.

Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?" Exodus 4:1

God then instructed Moses on the miracles he would be able to perform: the staff transformed to a snake, the ability to give and cure leprosy, and the turning of water into blood.

It was then that Moses put his life's blessing at risk, challenging God's ability to work through him.

Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." Exodus 5:10

First of all, Moses lacked confidence in his ability and in God's capability to empower him to overcome obstacles -- in this case, not being a good public speaker. God had already given him the words to say. Secondly, Moses implied that God had not equipped him for the job when he says, "I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant." I guess Moses expected to be gifted with newfound eloquence if God truly wanted him for this mission. God does not give up on Moses as he responds, "Who gave man his mouth? ... Now go. I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." What a deal! God promises to equip Moses and gives him the command to go for the second time. Moses really shows that he is not a man of well-developed character at this stage in his life when he blurts out, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it (Exodus 4:13)." If I were God, I would have moved on to the next deliverer in line. This Moses could not be counted upon to deliver a newspaper, if there were such a thing at that time.

In fairness to Moses, his knowledge of God was limited. He had only been confronted by a voice and a burning bush. He had no self-confidence and probably doubted that the mission would be successful. He wanted no part of it. He was willing to relinquish God's favor over his life and future. The Bible says that the LORD's anger burned against Moses. Still, God did not

give up on Moses even if Moses had given up on this newly confronted god.

We spent an enormous amount of time looking at this initial conversation with God so that we could see the depths from which Moses came. This is not a template on how we should talk to God. Aside from Moses' opening, "Here am I," he did everything wrong. There is such a thing as good prayer and bad prayer. Good prayer requires a maturity in the relationship. Moses had just started the process. He started out immature and faithless, only to become the cornerstone of strength and faith for his people.

Rule Number One: Get the relationship started!

The Hardship of Moses

What a task which was set before Moses: confront Pharaoh, secure the release of the Hebrews, lead them back to their homeland. We are talking about more than one million men, women, children and all their livestock. As we will see, even when Moses, now 80 years old, tried to be obedient, he faced hardships.

When Moses returned to Egypt, he was surprised by the reception he received as God's messenger. When the Hebrews heard that the LORD was concerned for them, they bowed down and worshipped. God had been silent for so long (around 400 years), yet they must have held fast to the hope of the promised deliverer. Their newfound hope was fickle, however, when their hardship was multiplied with the additional brickmaking task of gathering their own straw without a reduction in brick quota. This was the result of Moses' initial encounter with Pharaoh, a failure. The Israelite foremen were the first to greet Moses in a less than congratulatory manner.

When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Exodus 5:20-21

Moses responded by complaining to God.

Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this

people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”
Exodus 5:22

This was rather brash of Moses to confront God in this manner, especially after God had already revealed His plan to harden Pharaoh’s heart leading up to the death of the firstborn. What is God’s response? God reminds Moses that he is more blessed than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in that God’s self-revelation to Moses exceeded all others. The people’s response, however, was to stop listening to Moses. Still, Moses was God’s servant, not yet the deliverer.

At another command to go before Pharaoh, Moses questioned its usefulness.

But Moses said to the Lord, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips.” Exodus 6:12

God tells Moses again that Pharaoh indeed will not listen, but there is no worthy excuse for failure to execute God’s command. Moses did obey, and his confidence built with each successive time he spoke in the name of the LORD and witnessed God’s power displayed through him.

Moses’ growing maturity is displayed when he comes before Pharaoh with the very words of God which reveal why God is ready at this appointed time to free his people and bring about the destruction of the world’s dominant culture. Moses spoke to Pharaoh in the name of God, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?” It was a question of humility. God empowers all leaders. Refusal to acknowledge our weakness in humanity and our dependence upon God’s grace and mercy is a stench to the LORD. At the same time God was challenging Pharaoh, he was validating Moses. Moses had not displayed humility early in his relationship with the LORD, but by this

time, Moses had internalized and embodied this same quality demanded of Pharaoh.

At the announcement of the final plague, the ordained destruction of the firstborn, Moses left Pharaoh’s presence hot with anger. He knew the final piece of the puzzle had been played. He knew that this signaled the point at which God would bring about the release of his people from bondage. Indeed, when death entered every household not covered by the blood of the Passover lamb, Pharaoh relented. Moses had secured the people’s freedom, but as deliverer, he must lead such a great throng of people back to the land of promise. The multitude set out. They left with their possessions and the best of the land of Egypt. God had created such a fear in the people of the land through the series of plagues that the Egyptians were predisposed to give the departing Hebrews whatever they requested. In this manner, the Israelites plundered the Egyptians. Still, Moses no longer had to confront one man in God’s name but a million plus. The task was not getting any easier.

God was not through with Pharaoh. When Pharaoh confronted the reality of a vast workforce lost, he determined to bring back the Hebrews and enslave them again. He recalled their initial request to make a three day journey to worship the LORD at a distance. It was time to retrieve his labor pool. Pharaoh marched out with his army of fighting men and chariots to reverse a hasty decision. A band of 1,000,000+ Hebrews plus their flocks and herds does not move very quickly. Pharaoh was able to close the gap quickly, as he was driven by rage and contempt. Now Moses had to deal with hostile armies on both sides, for the Hebrews quickly lost hope in their leader and the God who had displayed his awesome power in Egypt before their very eyes.

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They

were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone, let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” Exodus 14:10

This time Moses did not complain to God but rather encouraged the people not to fear. They were to see God’s hand of deliverance. When God did the impossible again with the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the vast Egyptian army, Moses sang praise to God before the people. Singing to God is always an appropriate response, which also can be considered a class of prayer. The challenges to Moses’ leadership, however, were only compounded on the journey to come.

After going for more than three days without water, the people came upon the waters of Marah, but the water was undrinkable. The people grumbled against Moses saying, “What are we to drink?” Moses cried out to the LORD and was shown a piece of wood. He tossed it upon the water, and it became sweet. The grumbling, however, continued.

When another physical need arose, the people returned to their pattern of faithlessness, and Moses became the object of their scorn.

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into the desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” Exodus 16:2-3

While the Israelites left with the spoils of Egypt, their flocks and herds were either insufficient for their numbers, or they were unwilling to consume the sign of their wealth. Regardless, the people responded as if death in slavery was somehow preferable to relying on God for life in the present. Moses reminded the people, “Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.” The LORD sent them quail and manna, but the people were never satisfied.

At the next water shortage, the people repeated their outcry.

They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?” But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?” Again Moses cried out to the LORD. Exodus 17:1

In calamity, Moses cried out to God. This goes beyond our description of prayer as simply talking to God and escalates the desire for a positive outcome within the time frame of human need. While man may become impatient when faced with a dire need for God’s intervention, God is always patient. God is never flustered. The infusion of prayer with emotion is one-sided. God is slow in anger and abounding in love. Crying out to God is not wrong. We can at any moment be thrust into situations beyond imagination in which God is our only hope, but far too often, the prayer of desperation is a sign that prayer in times of blessing is lacking. It is a reactive approach to a relationship with God, rather and a proactive one. Moses’ situation, however, was indeed perilous. He entreated God, “What can I do with these

people? They are almost ready to stone me.” Would God bring them this far without delivering a basic human need? No, but the process of asking again affirms the relationship between Creator and creation, God and man.

The pattern was set: grumbling followed by intercession, complaint followed intervention. Unfortunately, even Moses was driven by the stiff-necked Israelites to the point of frustration and personal demise. The Bible tells us that Moses struck a rock with his staff to bring forth water for the people, but in the process, he failed to show reverence to God. He failed to uphold God as holy before the people. His shortcoming in this act at the waters of Meribah would deny him the opportunity to enter into the Promised Land. Moses was their deliverer, but they were his burden.

Rule Number Two: Persevere in obedience!

The Heart of Moses

When discussing matters of the heart, we think far too often of the emotion of love, such as in the bond between a husband and wife. Contrary to the Cecil B. DeMilles’ account, there was no secondary love interest awaiting Moses in Egypt upon his return. Moses took his wife and sons with him on his journey to execute God’s work of deliverance. Furthermore, in Exodus 4:24 we learn of his wife Zipporah’s act enroute which spared Moses’ life. Apparently, Moses’ sons were not circumcised on the eighth day as commanded by Jewish custom. How this unfulfilled command became known to Zipporah is uncertain, but she declared Moses to be a bridegroom of blood for herself as she performed the task and applied the foreskins to Moses’ feet. Moses certainly owed a lifetime of devotion to the woman he married in exile; however, Moses’ heart was continually revealed in his response to acts of disobedience and irreverence on behalf of the people he was chosen to lead.

While the grumbling persisted, it was in Moses’ absence that the people committed their greatest sin. Moses had ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. He waited in silence for six days. On the seventh day God spoke to Moses, and he entered the cloud which symbolized God’s presence. We learn that the glory of the LORD appeared as a consuming fire on the mountaintop. Moses was in God’s presence for forty days and forty nights. The unsupervised Hebrews grew impatient and assumed that Moses was surely consumed by the fire. Their spiritual compass was not in their midst.

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who

brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him. Exodus 32:1

Surprisingly, Aaron aided them in forming a golden calf from their earrings, and they worshipped the idol as if it were the god who had brought them out of bondage. The people sacrificed burnt offerings to what they had made and pronounced a festival. What they had done was detestable in God's sight and was a direct violation of the law which Moses was in the process of receiving, written on tablets of stone with the very finger of God.

God ended this time of extended prayer with a command for Moses to go see the magnitude of his people's sin.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I have commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." Exodus 32:7

God had personally offered Moses the blessing of Abraham, but Moses revealed his heart for the people. While they held him in contempt, he pleaded for mercy for his people from Almighty God. Moses did not accept Abraham's blessing exclusively for himself. Rather, he served as intercessor for an undeserving band of reckless descendants of Israel. Moses spoke candidly to God with concern for the namesake of the LORD within the pagan world, and the LORD relented. Still, 3000 died that day, but they

perished at the hand of the Levites who, on Moses' instruction, displayed their zeal for the LORD.

Then Moses lifted another heart-revealing prayer to the LORD.

So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of this book you have written." Exodus 32:31-32

Moses not only refused to be the sole recipient of God's promised blessing, but demonstrated his selflessness as he put his eternal destiny on the line in exchange for God's forgiveness extended to others. That is the love of a man for his people -- that he lay down his life for his friends. Moses returned leadership challenge with prayerful intercession. Moses engaged overt sin with prayful petition for forgiveness. Moses stood in the gap for a hostile and undeserving people with prayers for mercy. We see the measure of a man by the nature of his prayers.

The people saw the power of God on display so many times but were unchanged in character, as when a man looks at his face in a mirror, then forgets what he looks like (James 1:23). Why should the people of promise act any differently at the end of their journey? Though the Israelites were on the verge of receiving their promised homeland, they rebelled with fear and dismay due to the report of the 10 spies who forecast unsuccessful confrontation with the occupants of the land.

But the men who had gone up with him [Caleb] said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All

the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt? And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Numbers 13:31-14:4

The community was on the edge of their blessing but were unwilling to step forward and claim it. Instead, the Israelites were given their voiced wish – to die in the desert. Only Joshua and Caleb among those 20 years old or more were spared, but the LORD reiterated his offer to Moses.

The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.”

Numbers 14:11-12

Again, Moses expressed concern for the people and God’s name rather than accept personal gain.

“Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ‘The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.

Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sins of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”

Numbers

14:17-18

Moses prayed to God, affirming God’s own character and position. The LORD responded with forgiveness yet judgment in accordance with Moses’ plea.

How did one man bear such a burden? How can one resist the blessings of God at the expense of others? Why would someone offer their own life to secure forgiveness for someone else, especially those so undeserving? How could one man’s character be so steadfast? Between the ages of 80 and 120, Moses learned that his life for himself was over. Whatever he did, whatever he accomplished, it was for God’s glory and edification.

You might think it easy for someone who was a firsthand eyewitness of God’s countless miracles. You might think it easy for someone who encountered the living God and was welcomed in His presence. Yet, where were the Israelites when God brought about the plagues of Egypt? Where were the Hebrews when God parted the Red Sea? Whose feet remained dry in the crossing? Who saw the destruction of Pharaoh’s army? Where were the descendants of Abraham when God provided quail and manna to sustain them? Where was that great throng when God spoke and displayed His glory in cloud and fire? Being a witness is not enough! Such character only comes through daily recognition of God’s sovereignty and a total dependence upon the Creator for every heartbeat. God breathed life into a lump of lifeless clay. Only when we recognize and reaffirm daily our position and the reason for our existence is such character

exhibited. Moses spoke with God, while the band of followers he led did not. Moses was shaped by prayer. He was not the man he was at age 40 when cast into exile, nor was he the same person who approached a burning bush. Prayer made the difference, but it is only in humility that such character can be lived out.

Rule Number Three: Your prayers define you.

The Humility of Moses

Humility is not something easily learned, especially when exposed to a life of privilege and blessing. Humility is an internal quality which reflects an inner peace. Though Moses knew the life of a prince in Egypt, he was cognizant of his heritage. All Moses had was stripped away when forced to flee from a death sentence for murdering an Egyptian taskmaster. The princely life was exchanged for that of a shepherd and herdsman in the deserts of Midian. It was no doubt a rough and solitary life with much time for reflection – forty years of it. Perhaps this simple life reshaped Moses' self-image. His first encounter with God revealed a man with little faith in his own ability – a man of low self-esteem. When allowed to wield the power of God, he remarkably retained a humble nature, perhaps initially out of sheer awe. This character trait, however, could only be maintained through persistent acknowledgement of God's attributes within prayer. When God is magnified, our lowly position is soberly clarified.

In return for obedience, God raised Moses to a place of honor and respect in the sight of men. God placed a sign upon Moses of His pleasure in their relationship.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. Exodus 34:29

Even Aaron was afraid to approach Moses. Moses, cognizant of his startling appearance, chose to cover rather than flaunt the sign of a man so often in God's presence.

When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Exodus 34:33

God affirmed Moses before the people in other ways as well.

The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Exodus 19:9

God also used his voice to uplift Moses as leader.

Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. Exodus 19:19

Even with the repeated reaffirmation of Moses as the leader chosen by God, the people rejected such signs.

The humble character of Moses is brought even more to light when we see the result of God's presence and power extended to others in the multitude. The Levites, Korah, Dathan, and Abriam, who belonged to the priestly tribe chosen to minister before the LORD's tabernacle, led a public rebellion declaring themselves just as holy as Aaron and Moses. They were right; none is holy but God alone. In the process, however, they wished to raise their own banner and bring down the men God set apart as leaders. In judgment, the LORD opened up the earth and swallowed these men and their families alive. Then fire fell from the LORD and consumed all such followers. The Bible tells us that the very next day, the whole community

had the audacity to grumble against Moses and Aaron again saying, "You have killed the LORD's people." Moses instructed Aaron to offer up incense for atonement, but not before 14,700 had died from plague. It was as if only the fear of the LORD maintained order and proper relationship – and that displayed over and over again.

Even Miriam and Aaron found themselves opposing Moses. They spoke against Moses after he took a Cushite wife. Furthermore, they challenged Moses' position as God's messenger, for they too had been recipients of God's revelation. The LORD spoke to all three in the defense of his unique relationship with Moses.

Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, he said, "Listen to my words: *When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*" Numbers 12: 5-8

God's response was to substantiate his relationship with Moses. God spoke of Moses' faith and prayerlife. God did not speak to Moses as one of the prophets. Moses' faith was not like any of the prophets. He was rewarded accordingly through relationship. This challenge was not left with merely the verbal warning, "Why were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Miriam was made leprous as a result of her sin. Moses immediately petitioned for her healing, which was granted only after seven

days of public disgrace. Moses' faithfulness was beyond challenge. Humility is a hard pill to swallow (and keep down).

At times, Moses spoke to God with such candor that we find it remarkable that God did not strike Moses down then and there. The Word says, "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend." Moses would often speak boldly and forcefully in conversation with the LORD. Why was he able to get away with such openness in his relationship with God? Why was he not afraid to ask for specific outcomes? Why did God grant those requests? Is it not the desire of each our hearts to have such a relationship? The answer, I believe, is embedded in humility. Moses' requests were selfless. Moses' motives were selfless. The Bible says plain and simply, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth [Numbers 12:3]." There can be no other response for one who truly knows God.

Rule Number Four: You're not God, not even close!

The Prayers of Moses

Of all Moses' conversations with God, the most revealing and most profound have been reserved for this final chapter. They are perhaps templates for the one desiring a prayerlife like that of Moses. Still, they cannot be used loosely or casually, as we must recall the character of Moses which entwines each conversation. We are mindful that Moses had a unique position as prophet and standard bearer.

Recall that Moses' conversations with God started out as merely complaints. When Moses' words to Pharaoh to "let my people go" went unheeded and brought retribution upon the Hebrews, Moses confronted God, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me?" We often resort to this kind of prayer. In my own prayerlife, I commonly ask, "LORD, what did I accomplish today that made one bit of difference for your kingdom? What have I done with the time you've given me that deserves another day? God, why was I not successful on this day? Am I missing your best for me through the choices I make?" While there is a place and time for this kind of prayer, these are more 'sound out' prayers. We don't know if we are doing God's will. We are questioning whether God has left us to walk this path alone. We are basically asking, "Where were you today, God?" It could be a signal that the relationship is not as deep as it ought to be. If you find yourself here often, dig deeper.

A step closer is the prayer of frustrated servanthood. When the people groaned for meat to eat in the desert, Moses voiced another prayer of frustration. He petitioned of God, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant?" Moses continued his discourse on the magnitude of the burden placed upon him as the shepherd of this enormous flock, ready to string him up at a

moment's notice. Moses concludes his treatise with the ultimatum which we examined previously.

If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now — if I have found favor in Your eyes — and do not let me face my own ruin.

Numbers 11:15

Sometimes we are simply at the end of our rope. As Moses did, we must simply state our inability to carry the load alone. This is not the prayer of casual complaint, for Moses was ready to surrender his life without God's intervention. Moses knew that God is a god of success, and He bestows blessing over his own. This kind of prayer acknowledges the relationship which exists. It says, "I am yours. I have a problem. Now, what are you going to do about it?" This is the prayer of the person who knows they are doing what God desires (or even commands), but they find unforeseen resistance. The pray-er finds himself in a position not of his own choosing while only trying to be obedient. God responded by allowing Moses to select 70 elders as anointed helpers.

Notice how the plea shifted in the above two examples. Early in the relationship Moses asks, "Why have you brought trouble upon this people?" He was not finding the measure of success he expected. He was concerned about how others saw him. In the later example, his focus shifts as he says, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant?" He declares himself God's servant and is concerned about his mission in life. If our measure of success is in the eyes of men, we are misguided and are setting ourselves up for disappointment. Rather we should concern ourselves with the mission we have been given and a life of significance in God's eyes. Moses felt so passionately about his God-given task that he would rather give up his life than fail. Had Moses required the continual affirmation of his band of stiff-necked followers as a measure of success, he never would have

made it out of Egypt. Moses had high expectations of his God and sought His favor.

We later see a maturing relationship as Moses requests to know God better. God honors those who seek Him, and they will not be disappointed. Moses had just descended Mount Sinai after being in God's presence for forty days and dealt with the people's incredulous sin of idol worship. God distances himself from the people and refuses to accompany them by fire or cloud because of their great propensity to sin. Moses set up a tent outside the camp. We are told, "As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses." It was within this setting of intimate conversation that we find this God-honoring request.

If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Exodus 33:13

God had expressed pleasure with Moses. He had 'found favor' with him. As deep as their relationship already was, it was Moses' desire to know God more. It was Moses' desire to remain in God's favor.

The Israelites learned the lesson the hard way that if they weren't receiving God's favor, they instead were under His curse. There was no middle ground. We often lose sight of this in our lives today. If the decision was to accept a blessing or a curse, all would choose the blessing. This, however, is a consequence, not a choice. The fear of falling under God's curse should be enough to evoke good decisions in life. The fear of God should be a strong motivator. Unfortunately, the fear of the LORD, which is the beginning of wisdom, is seldom instilled in us from parents and pulpits. Any desiring the favor of God must know and hold in awe the one whose favor they seek.

Later in that same conversation we find one of most faithful prayers ever voiced.

If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?
Exodus
33:15-16

God had said he would no longer accompany the Israelites on their journey, but the relationship between Moses and God had progressed so far that the concept of going alone was devastating. Moses did not want to take one step away from the God he loved, the God he feared, the God upon whom he depended. Moses affirmed to God that His people without Him are just people, like any others on the face of the earth. It is only their faith in God, the Creator, that was their distinguishing mark. At this point, God was displeased with the multitude which had grumbled their way out of Egypt. He, however, was pleased with Moses, His servant. Not out of weakness nor the changing of ones' mind did the LORD did maintain His presence with the people. God walked with Moses. Moses walked with God. The people benefited from their relationship.

Does the Christian today stand out from the crowd? Do we bear the distinguishing mark of God's pleasure? Do we crave the same measures of success as the world? Do we have such a desire to honor the name of the LORD that it permeates our every decision? Are we willing to embark on any course of action without knowing God's presence goes with us? What else will distinguish us from all the other peoples on the face of the earth if others cannot see that God walks with us?

The conversation did not close there. Moses made a further request. Only when you know God this well can you speak with boldness for God's further revelation in the manner of Moses.

Now show me your glory. Exodus 33:18

What a beautiful 'Amen' to the pinnacle of prayers! Moses had been in God's presence. Moses had heard God's voice. Moses had received God's favor. Moses had sought God's ways. Now Moses wanted to see God's glory. God was not repulsed by such a request because the relationship had drawn as close as possible between a man and his god. God responded favorably.

And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in the cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." Exodus 33:19-23

Is this not the ultimate crowning achievement in life – to witness God's glory? The glory of God is more fulfilling than any human relationship. God's glory is more thrilling than any amusement park ride. The glory of God is more uplifting than any mind-altering drug. The glory of God is more humbling than any mortal experience. It is more sustaining than any banquet. The glory of God is more to be desired than wealth or position. To experience the glory of God is to catch a glimpse of heaven.

Those who seek God will find Him. Those who know God will approach with humility. Those who worship God will find His favor. Those who do God's will will find His pleasure. Those who love God will enter his presence. Those who listen to God will hear His voice. Those who embrace God will experience His glory.

Those who seek an experience will be disappointed. Those who are not humble will be humbled. Those who fail to worship God will be abandoned. Those who fail to do His will will never be satisfied. Those who fail to love God will continue to be empty. Those who do not listen to God will be silenced. Those who fail to embrace God have missed the meaning of life itself.

As Moses and the Israelites approach the Promised Land again following forty years in the desert as a consequence of their lack of faith in God to deliver them, we find Moses near the fulfillment of his mission. He was 120 years old, but still strong. He was 120 years old, but still sharp. His God had sustained him physically and mentally, just as he had not allowed their shoes and clothes to wear out on the journey. Yet, Moses was disheartened. While he was at the border to the Promised Land for the second time, Moses was reminded of God's decision to forbid him from taking one step in the Land of Milk and Honey. Moses was sorry. Moses was repentant. Perhaps Moses could talk to God once again to gain His favor with one last request. Perhaps Moses could convince God to reverse His ruling.

Moses gives one final plea, only to be given his final instructions.

At that time I pleaded with the LORD: "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what God is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go

over and see the good land beyond the Jordan – that fine hill country and Lebanon." But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan. But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." Deuteronomy 3:23-28

In Moses' prior successful petitions he voiced concern for God's name and the outcomes to be avoided for God's namesake. This time the prayer was for selfish reasons. God's judgment stood, and Moses was instructed not to bring the subject up ever again. This is a very sad moment for the Deliverer. He finished his God-given mission, yet Moses was denied the fruit of his labor this side of heaven.

But what was Moses' response? Moses blessed the people and taught them a song – a song to remember, a song to reflect, a song to recall God's greatness, a song to know God's power, a song to live by.

The Song of Moses

Deuteronomy 32:1-47

*Listen, O heavens, and I will speak;
Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew,
Like showers on new grass,
Like abundant rain on tender plants.
I will proclaim the name of the LORD.*

*Oh, Praise the greatness of our God!
He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong,
Upright and just is he.*

*They have acted corruptly toward him;
To their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and
crooked generation.*

*Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise
people?*

*Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed
you?*

Remember the days of old;

Consider the generations long past.

Ask your father and he will tell you,

Your elders, and they will explain to you.

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,

When he divided all mankind,

*He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of
the sons of Israel.*

For the LORD's portion is his people,

Jacob his allotted inheritance.

In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste.

He shielded him and cared for him;

He guarded him as the apple of his eye,

Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young,

*That spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its
pinions.*

The LORD alone led him;

No foreign god was with him.

He made him ride on the heights of the land

And fed him with the fruit of the fields.

He nourished him with honey from the rock,

And with oil from the flinty crag,

With curds and milk from herd and flock

And with fattened lambs and goats,

With choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat.

You drank the foaming blood of the grape.

Jeshurun (Israel) grew fat and kicked;

Filled with food, he became heavy and sleek.

*He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his
Savior.*

They made him jealous with their foreign gods

And angered him with their detestable idols.

They sacrificed to demons, which are not God –

Gods they had not known,

Gods that recently appeared,

Gods your fathers did not fear.

You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;

You forgot the God who gave you birth.

The LORD saw this and rejected them

Because he was angered by his sons and daughters.

“I will hide my face from them,” he said,

“And see what their end will be;

For they are a perverse generation,

Children who are unfaithful.

They made me jealous by what is no god

And angered me with their worthless idols.

I will make them envious by those who are not a people;

I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.

For a fire has been kindled by my wrath,

One that burns to the realm of death below.

It will devour the earth and its harvests

And set afire the foundations of the mountains.

I will heap calamities upon them

And spend my arrows against them.

I will send wasting famine against them,

Consuming pestilence and deadly plague;

I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts,

The venom of vipers that glide in the dust.

In the street the sword will make them childless;

In their homes terror will reign.

*Young men and young women will perish,
Infants and gray-haired men.
I said I would scatter them and blot out their memory from
mankind,
But I dreaded the taunt of the enemy,
Lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has
triumphed;
The LORD has not done all this.' ”
They are a nation without sense,
There is no discernment in them.
If only they were wise and would understand this
And discern what their end will be!
How could one man chase a thousand,
Or two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
Unless the LORD has given them up?
For their rock is not like our Rock,
As even our enemies concede.
Their vine comes from Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah.
Their grapes are filled with poison,
And their clusters with bitterness.
Their wine is the venom of serpents,
The deadly poison of cobras.
“Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults?
It is mine to avenge;
I will repay.
In due time their foot will slip;
Their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.”
The LORD will judge his people
And have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength
is gone
And no one is left, slave or free.
He will say: “Now where are their gods,
The rock they took refuge in,
The gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices
And drank the wine of their drink offerings?*

*Let them rise up to help you!
Let them give you shelter!
“See now that I myself am He!
There is no god besides me.
I put to death and I bring to life,
I have wounded
And I will heal,
And no one can deliver out of my hand.
I lift my hand to heaven and declare:
As surely as I live forever,
When I sharpen my flashing sword
And my hand grasps it in judgment,
I will take vengeance on my adversaries
And repay those who hate me.
I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
While my sword devours flesh:
The blood of the slain and the captives,
The heads of the enemy leaders.”
Rejoice, O nations, with his people,
For he will avenge the blood of his servants;
He will take vengeance on his enemies
And make atonement for his land and people.*

Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

Then Moses blessed the tribes of Israel, climbed Mount Nebo to the top of Pisgah, overlooking the whole land, and died. Moses

was buried in secret place in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor by God's own hand. Here the prayers of Moses this side of heaven are ended.

Rule Number Five: It's not words but relationship!

Reflections

As Christians, we too can approach God with boldness, for we know the extent of His love for us. While God revealed himself to Moses as no other before him, God continues to reveal himself in his Word, through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and through prayer. We have advantages that Moses never had in approaching God. So why does our prayerlife not parallel Moses'? Recall that Moses' relationship with God started late in life, and his prayerlife matured as that relationship matured. Those seeking a better prayerlife are really seeking a closer relationship with God.

In studying Moses' conversations with the LORD, we are observing the depth of relationship possible with the God of all creation. Let us recall the parting snippets of wisdom left along our trail.

0. *Know God and His attributes*
1. *Get the relationship started*
2. *Persevere in obedience*
3. *Your prayers define you*
4. *You're not God, not even close!*
5. *It's not words but relationship!*

We saw that Moses' prayers were indicative of the maturity of his relationship with God. Moses first had to know the god of his forefathers and what He expects of us. We saw that obedience is demanded, and God is faithful. We saw that our talk with God is a window on our heart. We saw that our conversations with God reflect the extent of our reverence. You cannot just want a better prayerlife and expect it to happen. You cannot just read the prayers of others and increase the efficacy of your own. The prayers we examined were Moses' prayers. They were Moses'

conversations with God. They were Moses' open dialogue with the LORD. We, however, can strive to understand those prayers in the context of his servanthood. We can seek the devotion to God's will as expressed by Moses' life and prayers. We can know the depth of relationship possible and set our sights on truly knowing the God of Moses.

Like all relationships, there is a starting and ending point. As a prerequisite, we have to know of God, His sovereignty, and His holiness. The starting point of a relationship is the prayer for salvation, acknowledging that we cannot measure up to God's standard and that Jesus is Lord and Saviour. God took upon himself through His Son the punishment of death that we deserve. It is only through Christ's imparted righteousness that we can come into God's presence. It is then our life's desire to live under God's blessing and experience His glory. Prayer plays a paramount role in deepening that relationship and finding our role of significance. The endpoint of the relationship is defined by our mortality. For the Christian, however, the passing from life to death to life is a new beginning – the beginning of a new relationship where God's glory is eternally evidenced, the start of a new relationship where God's will is perfectly clear, the start of a new relationship where God's praise is neverending, the beginning of a new relationship which is forever affirmed. Praise be the name of Our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ who knows us and wants to be known by us. Amen & Amen.

About the Author

Randy Doyle Hazlett is a world renowned scientist and engineer. He pursued a career of excellence in corporate research until he felt God's pull leading him to pursue interests that would be more God-honoring. Dr. Hazlett received a doctorate in chemical engineering from the University of Texas in 1986. Since that time, he has resided in the Dallas area. His family attends First Baptist Church of Dallas, where Dr. Hazlett teaches in various children's department ministries. Dr. Hazlett has a wife, Rose, who is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, and two children, Courtney and Creighton. While Dr. Hazlett grew up in a Christian home, he attributes his success in the pursuit of God to the teaching of strong Biblical principles, the support of a God-fearing wife, and persistence in prayer. Dr. Hazlett is available for public speaking events and meetings.

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The Prayers of Moses

by Randy Doyle Hazlett, Ph.D.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



The prayers of Moses, often overlooked in casual Bible reading are packed with power and truth. In this treatment of these prayers, Randy Hazlett has provided a heart-warming insight into the struggles, successes, and joy of the great prophet and has done so in such a way that we moderns who face the same kinds of life issues as Moses can find inspiration and encouragement in following his example of absolute trust in a sovereign God.



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