

The First Third

Exodus 2:11-2:22

INTRODUCTION: Moses was 120 when he died just outside the land of promise. His life can be thought of in *thirds*. 40 years in Egypt, 40 years in Midian, 40 years in the Wilderness. The tendency of most American readers is to rush over to the “good part” and get into the final third of his life.

But in doing so, we fail to recognize that the reason he has the final third is because he learned what God was teaching in the 1st and 2nd third of life.

Suppose you divided your life into 3rds. The average life expectancy for an American is 78 years - So every 26 years you enter into another third. 1st: birth to 26, 2nd: 26 - 52, 3rd, 52-death. I want to talk to you today about the 1st third, your life up to 26. How did it go? Are you proud of it? Any regrets? For those who are in the first third, perhaps you can't wait to move on.

Did you know the #1 prayer request I get from young people is that they will learn to accept themselves rather than constantly try to be like someone else?

I think today's text can help you with your relationship to YOU 1.0.

CONTEXT: Last week we saw the birth of, “Baby Moses”. Moses was born under the **sentence of death**. There, in the land of Goshen, every household was marked by mourning as Israel lamented the slaughter of the innocence under the cruel hand of Pharaoh.

But there was a couple, **Amram** and **Jochebed** - It is said that Amram had a vision that his unborn son would one day deliver the people of Israel from bondage. So when that baby was born, they didn't fear the edict of Pharaoh, but rather they hid him for three months, until the time came when they could hide him no longer. It was then that Jochebed formed an ARK of bullrushes and dabbed it with pitch and sent this baby sailing down the Nile river. Big sister Miriam following along the river bank to see what God would do.

And then it happened, this little basket caught the attention of Pharaoh's daughter, Bithia. When she opened the basket she knew immediately this was a Hebrew child. How did she know? Well, he bore the mark of circumcision - the sign of the covenant that God had with his ancestor Abraham.

Miriam suggested a nurse made for the baby from among the Hebrews. Bithia agreed and called for Jochebed to nurse her own son till around the age of 7, at which time this child called, “MOSES” would be raised among the Princes of Egypt. He would receive the best of the best, education, health care, nutrition. He would be a child of

two Mothers - He would have the **PHYSICAL** nurture of Bithia and he would have the **SPIRITUAL** nurture of Jochebed.

30 some odd years pass from the close of Exodus 2:10 and the start of 2:11. When I read verse 11, Moses is 40 years of age.

TEXT: Exodus 2:11–3:5 (ESV)

¹¹ One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people...

Notice that phrase, "His people...".

- Moses had an Egyptian name, but a Hebrew Identity.
- His clothing was Egyptian, but his soul was Hebrew.

Progressively, he saw himself as a stranger and an Alien in a foreign land. This world, "Egypt" was not his home, he was just passing through.

11b. he went out to his people... and looked on their burdens,

Jochebed, had gotten it right. She gave this child a Hebrew Identity. He would forever be haunted by the songs his mother sang. He would forever remember the stories she told - stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His conscience had been shaped by the very scriptures he would one day write. So while his **HOUSE** was in Egypt, he never forgot the fact that his **HOME** was in the land of promise.

The Jews were his people. Their God was his God. Their history was his history. And their burdens were his burdens.

11b. he went out to his people... and looked on their burdens...and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.

Notice the repetition of the phrase, "one of his people", for emphasis. The Hebrew word literally means one of his brethren.

He sees an Egyptian task master striking one of his brethren...the Hebrew word for "Beating" is a word that means striking to kill. He sees one of his brethren being beaten to death on the streets of Egypt.

¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one,

This indicates that what is about to happen is not some white hot fit of rage, but rather a premeditated decision. Moses knew the consequences of what he was about to do.

12b. he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Same word as in verse 11, he struck him as if to kill him. The Egyptian dead, Moses hides the body in the sands of Egypt, and tried to forget what had happened.

13 When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?"

There is the same word again, he saw a Hebrew, striking another Hebrew as if to kill him. The is bewildering to Moses. You see, Moses had contemplated and meditated long and hard on what it meant to be a Hebrew. To be a part of something with a long and ancient history, a story written by God Himself.

He couldn't comprehend why two kinsmen with the same heritage as him would be striving together.

14 He (that is the Hebrew) answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?"

You see, while Moses identified with the Hebrews, the Hebrews did not yet identify with him. "Moses, you may be a Prince of Israel, but you hold no rank among the Hebrews, stay in your Egyptian lane". Then he takes it a step further.

14b. Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

Panic sweeps over Moses. Word had spread. Had it reached the Egyptian Authorities? Who saw? There were only three people there - Moses and he hadn't told anyone. The Egyptian and he surely hadn't told anyone... then the Hebrew that Moses rescued. His Hebrew brethren has ratted him out, betrayed an act of kindness. Moses didn't trust the Egyptians, now he couldn't trust the Hebrews... so he runs.

14c. Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Moses fled to the land of Midian. There he sat by a well, a 40 year FUGITIVE. He thinks of his biological family, Amram, Jochabed, Miriam and Aaron whom he expects he will never see again. He remembers his foster mother Bithia whom had come so far and seem to be close to embracing the God of the Hebrews. But all of that was ancient history to him now. And there he sat, alone, confused, despondent, feeling as alone as a man has ever felt.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

It reminds me of scene in an old Western. The shepherds of Midian are men. But this one man, a priest named Jethro had no sons. So he had raised and trained his girls to look after the sheep. I'm sure that Jethro prayed daily for God to bring seven young men into their lives, to help with the work and to give him a legacy.

Day after day the girls would come to the well to water the flock, and day after day the local men would insult them and drive them off until their flocks had been served. That is until Moses arrived.

17 The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock.

Imagine the scene, Moses was handsome, no doubt. He was robust from his Egyptian diet, in the prime of life, and he intervenes to show honor to these seven daughters of Jethro.

18 When they came home to their father **Reuel**, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?"

So when I refer to Moses's father in law in this study, I call him **Jethro**. But here he is called, "**Reuel**". There are a couple of possible explanations,

1. These two names are used interchangeable for the same person just as Jacob and Israel are used interchangeably.
2. One name - **Reuel** is his proper name and **Jethro** (*meaning his excellence*) is more of a title of respect he would have been called as a Priest.

Either way - the girls are chatter boxes when they get home. Jethro asks, "how are you home so early today?" Apparently this sort of thing with the shepherds was a regular occurrence, making for every day to be a long day.

19 They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock."

They identify him as an Egyptian. He looked like an Egyptian, dressed like an Egyptian.

20 He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

You can imagine the dinner table that night. This handsome young stranger enjoying a meal with Jethro and his seven daughters.

21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah.²² She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

1. Acquired an Identity

Throughout the first 40 years of his life Moses learned to think of himself as a member of God's covenant community. No matter how strong the pull of Egypt was his association with Israel was stronger, deeper.

According to Barna Research -

- Nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the **age of 13** (43%)
- Two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their **18th birthday**.
- One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while **18 to 21** years old.

Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday. Barna noted that these figures are consistent with similar studies it has conducted during the past twenty years.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the research, in Barna's eyes, is the prevalence of decisions made during childhood. "Families, churches and parachurch ministries must recognize that primary window of opportunity for effectively reaching people with the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection is during the **pre-teen years**. It is during those years that people develop their frames of reference for the remainder of their life – especially theologically and morally."

I plead with you parents of kids 13 years of age and younger. Please, for the sake of your child's soul - build your life around the ministry of this church.

We want to have amazing **programs** in this church, but far more important - we want to have amazing **people**. We have sought and found godly, wise leaders to teach them the truth and to pour into their lives.

- **Jonathon Murdock** (and his wife Kalee)- are graduates of Trinity Baptist University. Jonathon oversees the children's ministry of our church. I've never seen a young man with more energy and passion in serving the Lord - please don't give him coffee.
- **Josh Wood** (and his wife Shena) - Josh is our Pastor of Family Ministries. He loves the Lord and love the Word. God is doing an amazing work in their life and family.

I want my kids influenced by men and women like them. I want my kids to identify as being a part of their tribe. If you knew these men, you would want it for your kids and grandkids as well.

Those of you who are in the student ministry - own it! Don't think of yourself as a **Baseball player who goes to Motion Students. Think of yourself as a Motion Student who plays Baseball.** That will make all of the difference for you later in life.

TODAY - Jonathon Murdock will be at a table in the foyer signing up volunteers for VBS. That's one week - JUNE 21-25. Listen over 100 kids are already signed up - it's going to be absolutely huge this years. WE NEED YOUR HELP.

But also, be like Jochebed and Amram and POUR TRUTH into your kids. Read Bible stories to them. Teach them the Hymns of the Faith. You are their primary children's minister.

Not only Identity, but secondly notice we develop...

2. Developed his Instincts

In this first chapter of life Moses developed the instincts that God would use to change the world.

You may have heard Moses described as a Murder by other Pastors, but the TEXT doesn't describe him that way. Jewish tradition never looked at him that way. Listen to the words of Stephen in

Acts 7:23–25 (ESV)

²³ "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴ And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵ He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

Moses instinct was to deliver his brethren from the cruel hand of the Egyptians. Turns out, that is exactly what God intended for him to do. BUT, they weren't ready for it, and probably in many ways Moses wasn't ready for it.

ILLUSTRATION: I wish you guys could have heard me as a younger preacher. I was mean! I'll never forget preaching at Trinity Baptist Church. The Sunday school superintendent got up before me and basically chewed the church out for not being faithful to Sunday school then he proceeded to sit down and sleep through the entire sermon.

That flew all over me - I found it a very convenient illustration. My text was, "these people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me". I said for example, suppose there was a Sunday school superintendent who stood before a church and told them that they all should be horrible for missing Sunday school.. .then proceeds to take a nap during the Sunday service. A gasp went through the room. Elbows were flying everywhere. I said, "Y'all don't worry about it, he's asleep, he didn't even hear me!"

Well I didn't get invited back to that church. And the truth is, I should have picked that fight in private not in public. But you know - the instinct was right on the money. He didn't have any business in church leadership. His heart wasn't in it.

The older I get, the more I hope that I don't lose those instincts. I hope I expect much out of those people who wear titles of leadership. They should set the example, they should give, they should engage, THAT IS LEADERSHIP.

He learned Identity, Instinct,

3. Gained Insight

Can you imagine how Jaded Moses could have felt after being betrayed by the very man whose life he saved? But from what we can tell, that's not how he responded. He just learned a lesson about people. A lesson that would serve him well when his life finds its ultimate purpose.

He will lead millions of Hebrews through the desert and they will gripe and complain the entire way.

- They thirst God gives them water from a rock.
- They hunger God gives them manna from heaven.

What do they do? The moan and complain - life was so much better in Egypt. How quickly we forget.

But it was those early years that Moses learned something of humanity that would serve him for years to come.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

The next 40 years of Moses' life will be spent in the land of Midian. He had graduated from the University of Egypt, now he will get his Masters degree from **WILDERNESS UNIVERSITY**.

Every man who wishes to be used greatly by God must gain his degree from Wilderness University.

- We must be trained by her wise professors
- We must be sit in her lonely classes of solitude
- There and only there will we learn to look to and lean upon his Master

Examples:

- **Joseph** learned this lesson in the pit and a prison.
- **Elijah** learned this lesson fleeing from the wicked Queen Jezebel.
- **David** learned it while fleeing from Saul
- Even our **Lord** Himself was proven in the dessert as he fasted 40 days and was tempted by Satan.

There is a temptation when we enter this Season of Life for us to feel as though we are a different person. This new version, YOU 2.0 can have a tendency to despise the former version of yourself.