

High Maintenance Relationships: The Intimidator

Hebrews 11:23-29

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(Based on High Maintenance Relationships by Dr. Les Parrott)

Video

Moses is a hero from the Bible who knew something about standing up, standing alone and standing strong for God even when it meant facing intimidating people and circumstances. He didn't get to that level of faith maturity over night. We'll look at his story today as we begin with a reading from the New Testament book of Hebrews.

Read Hebrews 11:23-29

Hebrews gives us the highlight reel about Moses, but today I want to hit a few sections from the book of Exodus to look at the life of Moses. We begin with Chapter 5 of Exodus, when God instructed Moses and his brother Aaron to speak to the King of Egypt and asked the king or Pharaoh for permission to allow the people of Israel to break from their hard labor and go a three day journey into the wilderness so they could worship the Lord.

When Moses made his request, we discover the type of man and personality of Pharaoh.

Profile of an Intimidator

Discounts: Pharaoh discounted Moses with words like “**who is the Lord that I should heed him and let Israel go? V.2** Meaning, know one tells me what to do. I don't answer to anyone.

Critical: Pharaoh answered with a critical spirit by accusing Moses and Aaron of “**taking the people away from their work.**”

v.4 Pharaoh only sees the negative and suspected the worst.

Set-up: Pharaoh set up a no win situation by punishing the people of Moses. Pharaoh gave instructions that instead of the Hebrew slaves being given straw by the Egyptians to make bricks, the slaves now must gather their own straw and yet still produce as many bricks as they did before. Vs.7-8 He expected the impossible.

Divisive: And beyond all of that, Pharaoh brought so much punishment upon the people Moses was seeking to free that the stress began to cause division between the people and Moses. The people began to blame Moses and Aaron for making their problems worse. Vs.21-23 Pharaoh knew how to split or divide people to get his way and conqueror.

Application

Intimidating people and relationship are not just people in high power positions. Any of us could have a “Pharaoh” in our relationships where the person we constantly interact speaks words that discounts who we are, what we do, what we think and feel. There can be that friendship or relative that more often than not has the critical opinion or reaction to our ideas and efforts. You may have that person whom seems to set up the no win dilemmas with you.

Relationships that tend to intimidate our efforts come and go but sometimes it could be the people we see most often. It could be a spouse, a coworker a person in the neighborhood.

Illustration: Marlene and I are thinking about going to Ohio and visiting friends from a church I pastored while attending Ohio State. There were a lot of great families there but she reminded me the another night of one couple. The husband was very domineering. He pretty much made all the decisions. He insisted

that no trees be planted in the yard because it made mowing the yard easier. He controlled all the money. He even refused to allow his wife to hang any pictures of the family or otherwise on the walls of their home. This woman would never call her husband by name; she would just refer to him as “my husband.” To us it seemed like a marriage where she was constantly intimidated because her husband acted like Pharaoh.

Preparing to confront the intimidation: Exodus 6:1-9

God helped Moses to take on the intimidator in his life. God had to teach Moses truths about how God would work so Moses could confront the one who intimidated.

Exodus 6:1 tells us God spoke to Moses and assured him that “**by a mighty hand**” God would work through Moses to free the people.” The mighty hand of God means Moses could stand up because would be the source of courage and strength.

Exodus 6:5 describes how God reminded Moses that God was in the fight and battle. God assures Moses he has “**heard the groaning of God’s people.**” Knowing that God had heard the cries is another way of telling Moses that he was not in the battle alone.

Exodus 6:6 There was also a time for decision when Moses and the people would have to decide whose power would they trust in the most, God or the threat of Pharaoh. In verse 6 God says things to Moses like, “**I am the Lord, I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians...I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.**”

Moses and Aaron gained the courage to stand up to the intimidation of Pharaoh because Moses trusted God had given him the mission. It really wasn’t Moses’ mission it was God through Moses. Any challenge for the Lord requires we first know where

we stand with God. Any challenge requires we know that we drawl our strength from God. If we don't make that claim we'll break and back down.

There is a very telling statement in chapter 6:9. It says, “**Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.**” Before we take on the intimidating relationship know that you do so by your strength in God.

Engaging the intimidation: Exodus 7:1-9

There were three things God would do with Moses to overcome the intimidator.

Chapter 7:1 reminds us God told Moses “**See I have made you like God to Pharaoh.** What does that mean? It means we don't just need self-esteem we need God-esteem. God was telling Moses to stop seeing himself as inferior, subservient, a slave and start seeing yourself having empowerment from God. Those who intimidate usually get by with it because the people they intimidate buy into the lie that they are less than and should be intimidated. God told Moses quit living by the lie; live by faith in God.

Chapter 7:3-4 God warns Moses to expect resistance when the dynamics of the relationship begin to change. God tells Moses he will **hardened Pharaoh's heart** meaning he will allow Pharaoh to reveal how callous and rebellious Pharaoh could act toward God. God warns Moses that **Pharaoh will not listen.**

Some people aren't able to break the grip of intimidation in relationships because when the first attempt to stand up doesn't go well; they give up. God warns Moses expect resistance, an intimidator like Pharaoh who is use to getting his way is not going down easy. Pride and arrogance die hard.

7:9 Finally God reveals to Moses the gifts and skills Moses must use to take make a stand against Pharaoh. God instructed Moses to use the staff God had given to demonstrate the power of God.

Notice that God not only wanted Moses to speak to Pharaoh but demonstrate to Pharaoh the power of God working through Moses. God seems to do that when God has to cut an intimidator down to size. When God used David to defeat the giant Goliath, David first told Goliath he was going to be defeated, then David demonstrated how he would defeat Goliath. David used five smooth stones and his slingshot to take down Goliath. David had a slingshot, Moses had a staff. Both had their unique gifts and skills to defeat their adversaries.

When coping with the intimidating relationship in our lives there is a time for words and a time to step out in faith and demonstrate the intimidation tactics no longer work.

It may be the spouse who makes call to domestic violence hotline. It may be the coworker who submit's the grievance in writing about their supervisor.

It may be the parent who takes away the keys to the minor child's vehicle because the grades are poor.

One way or another if you have a intimidator to confront, look for the gift and skills God has already given you to take a stand.

Stop looking at your weaknesses and look for God's strengths and skills in you.

#The reward for confronting that which intimidates: Exodus 12:31

There is one verse of scripture that really sums up how things worked out for Moses. Exodus 12:31 states, **“Then (Pharaoh) summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, “Rise up and go away from the people, both you and the Israelites! Go worship the Lord, as you said.”** What a change in Pharaoh from the time Moses and Aaron first requested to be free to worship

God. And if you keep reading about the story of Moses, we all know that Pharaoh the intimidator isn't quite finished. Pharaoh will change his mind and seek to track down the Israelites as they head for the Promise Land but he and his army would drown in the Red Sea because finally, the Lord said enough was enough.

I don't think the parting of the escape of Israel, the parting of the Red Sea, and the punishment of Pharaoh and his army is the only miracle in this story.

The real miracle is in the reward of the courageous hearts and faith grown in Moses and Aaron. Between the time that Moses and Aaron first approached Pharaoh and the Israelites were set free are the 10 plagues.

It took God demonstrating ten times with signs and wonders that Pharaoh is not God before the intimidation stopped.

It took God ten times of sending Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh directly in front of their intimidator before they are changed men. Ten times God sends them to the intimidator and nine times they get rejected, that's not a very good batting average. But even though they were rejected; Moses and Aaron are growing in their spiritual maturity to face the source of intimidation in their life.

Their story reminds me how in the counseling process a person overcome their fears, despair, and other emotional - psychological wounds by facing them not running or hiding from them. The more they examine and talk about the pain and look at through a vision of strength and meaning, the more they are desensitized to the threat and danger. Repeatedly facing the intimidator can be used by God to grow us as he grew Moses and Aaron.

Illustration: Many of you know that Marlene takes care of Miller Williams a couple days of the week. Like many babies his age almost one year old, Miller likes to reach for the pull chain on the ceiling fan in the kitchen. Earlier this week Marlene had Miller in

the kitchen and he did what he has been doing for a while, he reached for the chain but this time he turned on the light instead of the fan. The light popped on and surprised Miller and he cried. He was hesitant for a day two to grab the chain he would reach toward it; but he really wouldn't grab. Friday morning I was holding Miller in the kitchen while Marlene was making him a bottle and he was back to reaching for chains. What was surprising this time he pulled the chain for the light, the light came on, he paused realized he was safe and in control and then began pulling the chain with the light going off and on. Because he kept reaching out to what threatened him; he is now past his fear and master of the ceiling fan.

God sending Moses and Aaron again and again toward their fears spiritually transformed their life.

- It caused them to solidify their trust and dependence on God.
- It grew their patience to wait on God. Sometimes we take our best shot and then wait. Moses and Aaron had to take ten shots at the source of intimidation before the major breakthrough came.
- God pushing them to repeatedly face Pharaoh helped them hone their gifts and skills. They got better at asking for what they needed, standing up for God and the people by repeatedly going face to face with the adversarial relationship.
- They got comfortable with being uncomfortable. Remember Hebrews 11 said that Moses was willing to endure ill-treatment with his people; than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses grew more capable for coping with taking the heat from his own as well as pharaoh in order to be obedient to God. All of us who especially are leaders or potential leaders in the church and elsewhere should take notice of what God used to grow Moses and Aaron.

Conclusion

The message Paul Hamblin placed on our church sign is a familiar one. If you didn't noticed it today it reads, "**Happiness is an inside job.**" Moses and Aaron discovered that if they would allow God to work on the inside, God would empower them to cope with the intimidators outside.