

“CHRISTIAN LIVING”

“Four Keys to Effective Living”

Scripture Reading – Acts, 7:20-36

Stephen speaking to the Sanhedrin continued, “At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father’s house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being ill-treated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’

“But the man who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

“After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord’s voice: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’. Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt’.

“This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.

‘By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

‘By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.’

Hebrews, 11:24-27, NIV

Legend tells how the life of Moses progressed in the Court of Pharaoh...

When Moses was entrusted to the waters of the Nile, he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh, whose name is given as Bithia, or more commonly Thermouthis. She was entranced by his beauty. Legend says that when she drew the ark out of the water, the archangel Gabriel boxed the ears of the little baby to make him cry so that the heart of Thermouthis might be touched as she saw the little face puckered in sorrow and the eyes full of tears. Thermouthis, much to her sorrow, was childless; so she took the baby Moses home, and cared for him.

Moses grew to be so beautiful that people turned in the street, and even ceased their work, to look at him. He was so wise that he was far beyond all other children in learning and in knowledge. When he was still a child, Thermouthis took him to Pharaoh and told him how she had found him. She placed him in his arms, and he was so entranced by the little child that he embraced him and, at the request of Thermouthis, promised to make him his heir. By way of jest he took his crown and placed it on the child’s head; but the infant snatched the crown from his head and flung it on the ground and trampled on it.

Pharaoh’s wise men were full of foreboding that this child would some day trample the royal power under foot. They wished to destroy Moses there and then. But a test was proposed; they set before the child a bowl of precious stones and a bowl of live coals. If he put out his hand and touched the jewels, that would prove that he was so wise that he was a danger; if he put out his hands and touched the coals, that would prove that he was so witless that he was no danger. The infant Moses was about to touch the jewels when Gabriel took his hand and put it on the coals. His finger was burnt; he put the burnt finger in his mouth and burnt his mouth; that, they say, was why he was not a good speaker but stammered all his life.

So Moses was spared. He was brought up in all luxury. He was heir to the kingdom. He became one of the greatest of all Egyptian generals; in particular he conquered the Ethiopians when they were threatening Egypt and in the end was married to an Ethiopian princess. But all the time he had never forgotten his fellow-countrymen; and the day came when he decided to ally himself with the downtrodden Israelites and say goodbye to the future of riches and royalty that he might have had.

“FOUR KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LIVING”

Moses was one of the greatest characters in the Old Testament.

Moses led the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. He received the Ten Commandments. He wrote the first five books of the Bible, the Law of Moses – GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY. He spoke to God face to face. He is named as a ‘CHAMPION OF FAITH’.

God was able to use Moses because he settled four basic questions in life...

WHO AM I? WHAT ARE MY CHOICES? WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

1. “WHO AM I?”

‘By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.’

Hebrews, 11:24, NIV

THE FIRST KEY TO LIVING AN EFFECTIVE LIFE IS TO BE YOURSELF

God made YOU for a purpose. He made YOU for a plan. There is nobody who can be YOU except YOU. (Jesus died for YOU because he could not imagine spending eternity without YOU.)

Moses had to deal with being himself early in his life.

In Egypt the baby Jewish boys were condemned to die, so his mother put him in a little basket and placed him in the River Nile. The daughter of Pharaoh was taking a bath and she happened to take this little boy back into the palace to raise as her own son. But Moses knew he was different from all the other Egyptian children – he was circumcised like the Hebrews, but unlike the Egyptians. Every time he went to the toilet, Moses wondered about his identity.

Moses had an identity crisis.

He was born Jewish, but he was raised Egyptian. He had to decide for himself at some point in his life ‘WHO AM I?’ This was an important choice for him to make because it would determine the rest of his life. As the young Moses became a man, the question became more intense, and he faced a difficult decision.

If Moses said, ‘I AM AN EGYPTIAN’ and faked his heritage he would live a life of ease. He would have an outstanding career. He would have fame and fortune. He was in line to be Pharaoh.

If Moses said what he really was – ‘I AM A JEW’ – he would be humiliated, thrown out of the palace, and sent to live with a bunch of slaves for the rest of his life.

Moses saw his people being badly mistreated as slaves and he could not remain silent.

Because he was a man of character and integrity, he could not quell his conscience. So he made a decision that would cost him eighty years of his life. Moses rejected a promising career as an Egyptian and he refused to live a lie. Moses was more interested in his true identity than worldly security. Instead, he wanted to do what God had made him to do. Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. This was not some adolescent misbehaviour; Moses rejected Egypt and the Egyptian ways as a fully-grown man.

Moses ‘REFUSED’, the Greek word means ‘TO REJECT’ or ‘TO DENY’ or ‘TO TOTALLY DISOWN’.

There is something liberating about being yourself. If you want to live an effective life, the first step is to relax and be yourself. You cannot live life to the full if that life is based on a lie...

‘Only let us live up to what we have already attained.’

Philippians, 3:16, NIV

Christian maturity involves acting on the guidance you have already received.

We can always make excuses that we still have so much to learn. The instruction for us is to live up to what we already know and live out what we have already learned. We do not have to be sidetracked by an unending search for truth.

2. “WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?”

‘Moses chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God...’

Hebrews, 11:25a, NIV

THE SECOND KEY TO LIVING AN EFFECTIVE LIFE IS ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN LIFE

Moses ‘CHOSE’. The Greek word literally means ‘TO SELECT’ or ‘TO DECIDE’.

Do not blame somebody else for your life. Do not say, ‘BUT, IT IS NOT MY FAULT’. Do something about it. Decide to change.

Consider the man by the pool of Bethesda who had been there for thirty-eight years...

Jesus began by asking the man if he really wanted to be cured.

The man had waited for 38 years and it might well have been that hope had died and left behind a passive and dull despair. In his heart the man might be well content to remain an invalid for, if he was cured, he would have to shoulder the burden of making a living.

The man’s response was immediate.

You would think that the man would have responded with an enthusiastic, ‘YES! OF COURSE I WANT TO BE HEALED’. But, instead, he began to give excuses: “I am all alone... I do not have anyone to help me... Other people have let me down... Other people always seem to get in ahead of me. I do not have a chance in life”.

‘Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”. At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.’

John, 5:8-9a, NIV

The fact is, I have choices I can make in life – and so do you!

God has given me the freedom to choose and he has given that freedom also to you. What I choose today will determine my tomorrows. What you choose today will determine your tomorrows. That is called accepting responsibility. The Bible shows that people who accept responsibility for their own lives tend to lead effective and fulfilled lives.

You cannot blame somebody else for the direction of your life.

One of the marks of maturity in life is that you accept responsibility for your own decisions. You do not blame other people. Society loves to let us pass the buck and blame someone or something else: “IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT”.

Looking to blame others is nothing new.

Way back in the Garden of Eden, Adam blamed the woman and Eve blamed the serpent...

But the fact of the matter is: nobody can ruin your life ultimately except you.

Satan cannot do it because he does not have enough power. God won't do it because he loves you too much. So ultimately, the only person who can totally and permanently mess up your life is YOU.

If you want to be effective in life you need to be yourself, and you accept responsibility.

As Moses did, you make some choices. No matter what has happened to you in the past, no matter what has happened to you in the last twelve months, you have the freedom to choose how you are going to respond: 'AM I GOING TO BE BITTER?' or 'AM I GOING TO BE BETTER?'.

'CHOOSING THE RIGHT AND REFUSING THE WRONG' (William James Pearson).

In Hebrews, 11:24, we see Moses 'REFUSING'.

In Hebrews, 11:25, we see Moses 'CHOOSING'.

3. "WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME?"

'Moses chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt...'

Hebrews, 11:25-26a, NIV

THE THIRD KEY TO LIVING AN EFFECTIVE LIFE IS TO ESTABLISH A VALUE SYSTEM FOR YOUR LIFE

This is not something you decide haphazardly.

You must give it serious thought. You give it consideration. This is what Moses did. He clarified his values. He thought them out. He worked out his own priorities for his life.

He regarded disgrace of greater value than Egypt's treasures.

The Greek word is a book-keeping term that literally means 'TO WEIGH IN THE BALANCE' or 'TO CONSIDER THE OPTIONS' or 'TO EVALUATE THE WORTH' or 'TO CONSIDER THE VALUE'. It is as though Moses had calculated for himself what was truly important and what was not. Moses gave up earthly glory for the sake of the people of God.

'As the adopted son of the Egyptian princess, Moses could have led an easy life in the palace. But his faith moved him to refuse that kind of life. He chose to identify with God's suffering people. True faith causes a believer to hold the right values and make the right decisions. The phrase 'PLEASURES OF SIN' does not refer only to lust and other gross sins. The phrase describes a way of life that we today would call 'successful' – position, prestige, power, wealth, and freedom from problems.'

Warren W Wiersbe

Moses rejected what the world is frantically searching for today.

His position and prestige as an Egyptian Prince in line to Pharaoh's throne provided him with every opportunity to experience what the world strives after. Yet he rejected all these things because he saw something of greater value.

PLEASURE *"I want to feel good."*

POSSESSIONS *"I want to be wealthy... I want to make a lot of money... I want to have 'the best' things that money can buy."*

POWER *"I want to be famous... I want to be influential... I want to be popular... I want to have power, prestige, position."*

GOD'S PURPOSE IS MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN POPULARITY

The title 'THE SON OF PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER' was a great status symbol.

He was second-in-command, in line to be Pharaoh. He was well known. He had status. People would bow before him. He had all the kind of popularity that most people would say, "I'D GIVE MY RIGHT ARM FOR THAT, JUST TO BE TREATED LIKE ROYALTY".

But Moses knew that popularity does not last.

Moses was not impressed by himself. Moses wanted God's purpose for his life. He said, "I WOULD RATHER BE A SLAVE FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE THAN BE THE KING OF EGYPT, WITH ALL THE POPULARITY, BUT NOT IN GOD'S PURPOSE OR IN GOD'S PLAN".

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN PLEASURES

Moses chose pain over pleasure, he chose discomfort over ease.

Why? Because he considered people were more valuable than pleasures. He was on 'Easy Street'. His was a life of luxury. Any whim would immediately be satisfied by his slaves. But Moses heard the cries of people and they were worth more than pleasures. In order to do the right thing he chose discomfort over comfort.

Given this choice, how would you react?

GOD'S PEACE IS MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN POSSESSIONS

There are some things in life that are more important than things.

There is a wonderful peace of mind that comes about you, a satisfaction, a sense of fulfilment when you know you are right in the centre of God's will. It is a peace that cannot be bought. It is a peace that is priceless.

It is a matter of values: we love people and we use things.

When we get this order in reverse, we get into all kind of trouble. Yet there are those who value possessions more than people. Those who will manipulate and use people to get their wants.

Paul considered worldly success as rubbish compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

'But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of

knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.'

Philippians, 3:7-9, NIV

Moses gave up the very things that most people spend their entire lives trying to accomplish and achieve. Why? Why did he do that? Why did he reject power, pleasure, and possessions?

'Moses regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.'

Hebrews, 11:26, NIV

The Greek word for 'LOOKING AHEAD' means 'CONTINUOUS ACTION'.

Moses had his values right because he had his vision right.

Set up a value system. Ask yourself: "WHAT ARE MY VALUES FOR LIFE?"

These are the things that are important to you. They will be the values upon which you make all your decisions.

4. "WHAT ARE MY GOALS"

'By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.'

Hebrews, 11:27, NIV

THE FOURTH KEY TO LIVING AN EFFECTIVE LIFE IS TO KEEP YOUR EYES FIXED ON THE GOAL

Your happiness is determined by your character... Your character is determined by your choices... Your choices are determined by your values.... Your values are determined by your vision – what you have your eyes on.

Moses was a man of vision.

What he did not do was concentrate on his problems. When the people cried out in Egypt because Pharaoh would not let them go, Moses brought their cries in prayer to God. When the people cried out in the desert, Moses brought their cries in prayer to God. When the people disobeyed and rebelled at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses brought their sin in prayer to God. Moses continually looked ahead and focussed his attention on 'HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE'.

Moses saw the present in the light of eternity.

He was able to recognise the present problems as passing in the light of his eternal reward in Heaven. He saw the invisible God and even had a glimpse of what Jesus Christ would do.

When Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave him so much more.

'The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this [a discerning heart]. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for

yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for – both riches and honour – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life'.

1 Kings, 3:10-14, NIV

Five key words sum up Moses' life...

He 'REFUSED'... He 'CHOSE'... He 'REGARDED'... He 'SAW'... He 'PERSEVERED' – 'ENDURED'.

'Moses gave up earthly glory for the sake of the people of God. Christ gave up his glory for the sake of mankind; and accepted scourging and shame and a terrible death. Moses in his day and generation shared in the sufferings of Christ, choosing the loyalty that led to suffering rather than the ease which led to earthly glory. He knew that the prizes of earth were contemptible compared with the ultimate reward of God.'

William Barclay

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

Hebrews, 12:1-2, NIV

*Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear,
We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair;
But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away,
All tears forever over in God's eternal day.*

*Sometimes the sky looks dark with not a ray of light,
We're tossed and driven on, no human help in sight;
But there is one in heaven who knows our deepest care,
Let Jesus solve your problem – just go to him in prayer.*

*Life's day will soon be o'er, all storms forever past,
We'll cross the great divide, to glory, safe at last;
We'll share the joys of heaven – a harp, a home, a crown,
The tempter will be banished, we'll lay our burden down.*

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of his dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race 'til we see Christ.*

Esther Kerr Rusthoi